MYSTICISM AND MODERN LIFE

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BY

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JOHN WRIGHT BUCKHAM

To H. W. B.

In Grateful Recognition
of Twenty-five Years of
Mystical Comradeship

"On all that my hand does
Thy hand is laid"

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PREFACE

Does religious conviction spring from the rationalizing faculty or the intuitive faculty, from the "freezing reason's colder part" or the "warmth within the breast"? Does it rest upon logic or faith?

This is an issue upon which the recent study of mysticism throws much light. Nor is it aiding us in this respect alone. It promises much help in untwisting the tangle of modern life and in affording a clue to its true value and use.

Many readers will take up—or perhaps let lie—a book entitled Mysticism with a not wholly unjustified prejudice. The phrase "religious experience" would be far preferable for a volume like this to the much-misunderstood and much-abused word "mysticism," were it not that the latter indicates the faith of a historic succession of men and women who have been the exponents and defenders of religious experience of an intense and significant type. While I shall endeavor to show that every one who has an immediate religious experience of his own is to that extent a mystic and belongs to the mystic fellowship, still I

agree with writers upon mysticism that there is a chosen company whom we may well call "the mystics" who have attained to such heights of religious experience as to serve in a peculiar way as its exponents—the great adventurers in the spirit realm. Their experience, while normal for them, is not the *norm* for all.

It is the aim of the writer in the first place to point out the presence of mysticism in modern life and thought, and then to assist, as far as he may, in the much-needed task of sifting the normal from the abnormal in mysticism, of clarifying the distinction which Professor Rauschenbusch has succinctly put in a letter to the writer, "between the open-eyed kind and the shut-eyed kind, the kind that makes a man realize his fellows and nature more keenly, and the kind that makes him lose consciousness of them and interest in them; the kind that makes human nature more complete and normal, and the kind that introduces abnormal and wild-eyed qualities."

Whatever tends to make religion esoteric, incomprehensible, over-refined, an affair of the elect and not of humanity as a whole, is misleading and fatal. It defeats religion in the name of religion. It is a common impression that mysticism is such. On the contrary—as I trust this volume will help to show—mysticism

in its normal form is not an inscrutable, exclusive religious cultus, but the gift, in some form, of everyone who will cultivate his capacity for it.

The task, for the author, relates itself very closely to one in which he has been for some time engaged and to which his previous volumes have been devoted—the study of the nature of Personality. In pursuing such a study it is impossible to pass by the mystics with their rich contribution to the meaning of this most fundamental of realities.

The gentle reader who does not care for the critical discussion of mysticism may omit Part II. The author deems this, however, to be a very essential part of the volume. "One does not like to be a fool, even a blessed fool," as a neighbor of mine remarks. Without a philosophy to justify him the mystic can hardly escape this suspicion.

In briefly acknowledging obligations I cannot do less than begin with the great mystics themselves, to whom I owe more than I can express for the generosity and confidence with which they have shared with me—as with all who will listen—the secret of their inner experience. To the writers upon mysticism also I am greatly indebted, as the following pages will show. Professor Rauschenbusch and Dr.

George A. Gordon have clarified and furthered my task with suggestion and cheer. To my colleagues, President C. S. Nash and Professor W. F. Badè, hearty thanks are extended for encouragement and aid; also to my wife and to Mrs. George DeWitt Castor, Miss Olive Brownsill, who in the last months of a fatal illness gave freely of her fine insight and sympathy to these chapters, and Miss Bertha M. Buckham. The editors of The Homiletic Review, Dr. Robert Scott and Professor George W. Gilmore, have extended greatly appreciated assistance. The latter has read the manuscript and has made many valued suggestions.

Acknowledgments are made with thanks to The Homiletic Review for the use of the chapter dealing with "Christian Mystical Literature"; to the Christian Intelligencer for the use of parts of the chapters "Lessons from the Mystics" and "The Mystic Way"; and to the New York Christian Advocate for the use of a part of the chapter "Mysticism and the Church."

The needless repetition of quotation marks in the case of longer extracts has been avoided. All indented paragraphs in smaller type should be understood as quotations.

Finally, in accord with the word of Plato in the Timæus, "All men, Socrates, who have

any degree of right feeling, at the beginning of every enterprise, whether small or great, always call upon God," the author would commit to the guidance of the Spirit of Truth this essay to honor and extend his gracious power in human hearts.

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS MYSTICISM?

WHOEVER reflects upon himself, his fellows and the world confronts Mystery, primal and perpetual. *In the beginning was Mystery*—at once a challenge and a promise. We know but in part. Yet ignorance and mystery are not the same. "The former means 'I know not,' the latter means 'I know not but it is known.' "[1]

As knowledge widens, Mystery deepens. The old mysteries disappear, but new ones take their places. Instead of vanishing, mystery becomes vaster, more inclusive, more pervasive. Yet it loses its chill and gloom and lightens, like the mist upon the mountain top, as the sun rises higher. The winds rend it, the sunlight pierces it. It grows prescient and purposeful. The certainty of a vast encompassing Reality makes itself felt.

I

Mystery is the matrix of revelation: *In the beginning was the Word.* Without mystery, revelation would lack motive, occasion, setting. Without revelation, mystery would be mean-

[1] W. E. Hocking: The Meaning of God in Human Experience, p. 236.

ingless, insoluble, blighting. The two involve one another.

As mystery is not synonymous with ignorance, so mysticism is not synonymous with mystery. *Mysticism is the certainty that grows up in the presence of mystery.* It is religion resting upon inner experience—the obverse side of mystery.

Mystery—the Word. From this antithesis emerges mysticism,—the most characteristic, persistent, and universal form of religion.

II

It may be well at the outset, in order to forestall misunderstanding and clear away, as far as possible, some of the prejudices which attach to the term, to present some representative definitions of mysticism and offer a brief preliminary account of it, as understood in this volume.

Mysticism means spiritual enlightenment. The mystic is one who closes (*μύειν*) the avenues of sense, not in order to be in darkness, but that the divine light "that never was on land or sea" may flow in upon his inner sight and enlighten him. Edward Caird wrote: "Mysticism is religion in its most concentrated and exclusive form; it is the attitude of mind in which all other relations are swallowed up in

the relation of the soul to God." Canon Inge, who has earned the right to a careful hearing upon the nature of mysticism, defines it as follows: "Mysticism is the attempt to realize in thought and feeling the immanence of the temporal in the eternal and of the eternal in the temporal."[2] Later in his volume he adds: "The shortest definition of mysticism which has ever been suggested is also one of the best: 'Mysticism is the love of God.'" To this might well be added, "the love of man." Few more truly mystical utterances can be found in literature than this of Augustine: "Blessed is he who loves Thee, and his friend in Thee, and his enemy for Thy sake."[3] Rufus M. Jones in his Studies in Mystical Religion defines mysticism as follows: "The type of religion which puts the emphasis on immediate awareness of relation with God, on direct and intimate consciousness of the Divine Presence. It is religion in its most acute, intense and living stage."[4] For "awareness" as the key word one might well substitute the more familiar term *experience*, or *recognition*.

As an experience, mysticism is spiritually sentient. "Mysticism," says Goethe, "is the scholastic of the heart, the dialectic of the

[2] Christian Mysticism, p. 5.
[3] Confessions, iv, 9.
[4] Preface, p. xv.

feelings."[5] The mystics are men and women of deep, though often quiet, emotional life. "'O taste and see,' they cry, in accents of astounding certainty and joy. 'Ours is an experimental science.'"[6] And yet, "to say that mystics lay stress on feeling as the element in man through which he can best approach divinity is no full account,"[7] any more than it would be to say that their main emphasis is upon thinking. The fact is that neither thought alone, nor feeling alone, nor both together, constitute mysticism. It fuses and yet transcends them. Nor is the will inactive. As the will that is "ours to be made Thine," it plays a most important part.

Mysticism is the immediate sense of Supreme Reality.[8] More definitely, and in its purest form, it is, in Pascal's phrase, "God known of the heart." It is the religion of the Holy Spirit.[9] It is the *realization and interpretation of religious experience*, for it includes not only the experience itself, but the attempt to give

[5] Quoted by Inge: Christian Mysticism, p. 338.

[6] Evelyn Underhill: Mysticism, p. 28.

[7] G. M. Stratton: The Psychology of the Religious Life, p. 175.

[8] By "an immediate sense," or "immediacy," I do not mean that which is independent of ideas, but that which transcends them. See Part II, Chapter II. Miss Underhill, in her volume Practical Mysticism, which has appeared since this writing, defines mysticism as "the art of union with Reality."

[9] "Christian mysticism is, in fact, the doctrine, or, rather, the Experience of the Holy Ghost" (R. C. Moberly: Atonement and Personality, p. 312).

it expression. That may seem a question-begging definition, and yet it is difficult to stop short of it. Philosophically, mysticism rests upon intuitional idealism.

Even more intimate than the relation of mysticism to reality is its relation to personality. Indeed, mysticism might be described as the awakening and development of the true self in conjunction with the Perfect Self. Or, as Mr. George Wharton Pepper put it in his Lyman Beecher lectures at Yale University, "Mysticism is the realization of one's self with God."

Mysticism comes very near being that which goes by the name of "personal religion." Anyone who has, or believes he has, a direct experience of God is to that extent a mystic. For he can neither possess nor express this conviction except as he transcends ordinary experience. Mysticism might be characterized as "the practice of the Presence of God." Professor James Bissett Pratt has put the case plainly thus: "Whoever prays, not merely with the belief, but with the immediate sense that God is with him and hears, is to that extent a mystic and a mystic of the highest type."[10] Much besides this is included in *mysticism*, as will appear in the pages that follow, but we are here trying to find the kernel.

[10] Psychology of Religious Belief, p. 163.

This by no means makes mysticism equivalent to religion. One may be religious, earnestly religious, whose faith in God is—or is conceived to be—a rational inference or an accepted belief, not an immediate experience, and who regards and fulfills his duties—as Kant counseled—in the light of divine commands. Religion, indeed, is righteousness as well as faith. It is a matter of intellectual belief, of cult and conscience and creed—an ethical, social, institutional fact, as well as an inner experience. Mysticism is thus but a part of it. But to many it seems the *salient* part—that by which religion is made one's own. Alison Parr, in Winston Churchill's The Inside of the Cup, expresses a demand of mysticism when she says, "I cannot take a consensus of opinion about Him—he must be *my* God."

III

By confounding mysticism as a whole with exaggerated forms of it certain popular misconceptions have become widespread which are not easily uprooted. One of these is that "mysticism" is equivalent to "*mistiness*"—that the mystic is one who holds some very hazy, ill-defined, dreamy notions about life and truth and God and himself which he neither understands himself nor can make clear to

others, "in sleep a king; but waking, no such matter." This mistaken idea of mysticism on the part of its detractors has grown largely out of the superficial assumption, "That which I cannot understand is *ipso facto* not understandable." On the contrary, the mystic, taking him "by and large," is one of the most convinced and convincing of thinkers. It is true that he cannot fully express himself. That which he regards as the truth has taken such possession of him and seems to him so rich and splendid that he cannot express it worthily. But there is nothing vague or indefinite in it. The muteness and stammering with which he is overcome is due only to superabundance of conviction. Nor is the mystic a mere visionary. Don Quixote is too far from genuine mysticism to be even a parody of it.

An equally groundless misconception of mysticism is that it is a dismal and dreary otherworldliness; the mystic a joyless, lack-luster ascetic. On the contrary, the mystic believes himself possessed of the only true secret of happiness. While the man of the world has been pitying him for the joylessness and colorlessness of his life, he has been pitying the devotee of pleasure for the very same reason. He is convinced that the life that is centered in *things* is shallow, meaningless, and exhausting,

and is thankful that he has discovered a life far richer and sweeter. In finding Him who is the source of life and joy, he is confident that he has all things and abounds. The Fountain of Perpetual Youth has been unsealed to him. He has gotten into touch with the Source of Life. As Chesterton, with true mystic mind, has said, "We have sinned and grown old, and our Father is younger than we." In coming into fellowship with Him we recover our true youth.

A still more serious misconception of mysticism is that which confounds it with occultism[11] Close as this realm lies to the mystical, it is, as the historians of mysticism are more and more clearly showing, a distinct and alien territory,—a Moab lying over against the Holy Land of Mysticism. "Magical" and "mystical" are radically opposed conceptions.

Other misconceptions of mysticism there are, such as that it is a life of inactivity and emptiness, which we may hope the following pages will help to dispel.

IV

The study, as well as the cultivation, of mysticism has had its periods of decadence

[11] "Fetishism, Magic, Gnosis, Theurgy, Asceticism, Alchemy, Ritualism, etc., and still more recently, Spiritualism and Palladism—a long list of the terrible degradations of mysticism, which weighs heavily on us now, just when we seem almost ready to come into touch with the broad and integral life of spirit." E. Récéjac: The Bases of the Mystical Knowledge, p. 82.

and florescence. After a long period of comparative neglect it has now entered upon an era of renewal. When, in 1902, William James published his now famous volume, Varieties of Religious Experience, no one realized to what an extent the uncovering and examination of so many and varied religious experiences would stimulate the study of mysticism, or how many and potent influences were at work in the same direction. Since that time, from many causes, the interest in mysticism has grown widely and rapidly. Books of rare interest have appeared, like Baron Von Hügel's The Mystical Element in Religion, Evelyn Underhill's Mysticism and The Mystic Way, Professor W. E. Hocking's The Meaning of God in Human Experience, and Professor R. M. Jones' Studies in Mystical Religion. Older books on the subject, like Vaughan's Hours with the Mystics and Dean Inge's Christian Mysticism, have taken on fresh values. Many volumes upon religious psychology have given chief attention to mystical types of religion. Reviews and periodicals the world around have taken up the theme, until now it is hardly too much to say that the revival of interest in the study of mysticism has become one of the leading movements in present-day religious thought.

"There has been no similar movement of

mystical thought so widespread and original in impulse since before the Reformation" in the judgment of an English theologian.[12] "It is a good sign in this gray hour of crisis and of doubt," writes an Italian psychologist, "that so many are turning with renewed love to the study of the great mystics."[13]

The return of interest in mysticism is due partly to a reaction from the dominance of science, partly to a revolt from absolutism in philosophy, from dogmatism in theology, and from formality and frigidity in religion, but chiefly to the attraction of the subject itself.[14] Our age is weary of a science that resolves the universe into the mere play and product of

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[12] A. S. Martin: Review of Theology and Philosophy, vol. viii, 2, p. 69, note.

[13] Guido Ferrando: La Psicologia du misticisme, Psiche, vol. i, 4, p. 265. The same writer offers the following suggestion as to the manner in which the study of mysticism should be pursued: "It belongs to psychology to prepare the way and to prevail upon science, philosophy, and theology to reexamine and correct their valuations of mystical experience; so that scientists may lay aside their obstinate determination to consider mystics physically and mentally unsound; that philosophers may recognize that the doctrine of mysticism is not reducible merely to a negative affirmation of an ineffable and empty reality; and that theologians may abandon their distrust and hostility due to fear of certain pantheistic propositions which are found, it is true, in the writings of the mystics, but which have a significance very different from that which is attributed to them" (Translation by Professor W. F. Badè).

[14] In the year 1892, at the very beginning of the interest in the psychical study of religion, Thomson Jay Hudson, in that popular book, The Law of Psychic Phenomena, wrote: "What used to be known as 'vital religion' is gradually becoming a thing of the past, and is giving place to a cold, self-contained, unemotional sentiment, which is as unlike true religious worship as the other (emotional religion), and as abnormal" (p. 404).

unintelligent forces, of a materialism that seeks only utilitarian or hedonistic ends, of a philosophy that sinks spiritual values in intellectual formulas, and of a theology that goes on asserting ancient dogmas without revitalizing them or relating them to new truth. Mind and heart are calling for something deeper. The question is not whether religious truth is rational, but whether it has not a deeper rationality than we have been finding in it. Is there not a truth, as well as a peace, that "passeth understanding"?

Besides these negative reasons there are still stronger positive ones for the revival of confidence in the mystical sources of truth. It presents to philosophy new worlds for old. It is with a sense of rekindled youth that the modern student of philosophy, wearied with static absolutisms, hopeless mechanisms, and stand-pat idealisms, has received the mystic message of fresh creative energies and of new revelations of truth, lying hard by pathways long trodden by "due feet" that have never ventured to turn aside from them. How eagerly to-day is the note of mysticism in philosophy welcomed and listened to—that of a Eucken, a Bergson,[15] a William James! For,

[15] A clear account of the mystical aspects of Bergson's philosophy will be found in the International Journal of Ethics for April, 1913, by Professor Arthur O. Lovejoy.

as time goes by, it is the mysticism of Professor James, rather than his pragmatism, that is making the more lasting impression.[16]

For theology, even more than for philosophy, mysticism holds promise of unlimited reinvigoration. It uncovers to literature fresh and inexhaustible sources of inspiration. It offers to the church the way to the recovery of conviction and passion. It presents to the man and woman in the field, the shop, the factory, the home, a deeper insight into the sacredness of life. These may seem extravagant claims. They are, if mysticism is reduced to the limited meaning ordinarily given it; but taking mysticism in the larger, freer sense, its horizons are as wide as its insights are profound.

At the close of a penetrating and comprehensive address given at the International Psychological Institute in 1902, Professor Boutroux, after discussing mysticism, viewed from within and without, its reality and its value, said:

> If these reflections have sufficient foundation, it seems clear that a broad and complete study of mysticism offers not only an intrinsic interest which is at the same time scientific, but

[16] See, for instance, The Religious Philosophy of William James, by James Bissett Pratt, in the Hibbert Journal, vol. x, 1. See also Professor Troeltsch's discussion of James's religious philosophy in the Harvard Theological Review, vol. v, 4.

also still more, an interest affecting very directly the life and destiny of individuals and of humanity itself.

No farther word is needed to urge us to wider exploration and reflection in a realm so fair and full of promise, though it lies so high among the uplands of the spirit.

Part I

NEW FORMS OF MYSTICISM

"Quench not the Spirit."

What if the o'erturned altar
Lays bare the ancient lie?
What if the dreams and legends
Of the world's childhood die?

The world will have its idols,
And flesh and sense their sign;
But the blinded eyes shall open
And the gross ear be fine.

What if the vision tarry?
God's time is always best;
The true Light shall be witnessed,
The Christ within confessed.
—John G. Whittier: "The Vision of Echard."

CHAPTER I

THE MYSTIC WAY AND ITS MODERN EQUIVALENTS

In order to understand the relation of mysticism to modern life we should first seek to gain its attitude toward life itself. This can hardly be better done than through one of its most characteristic conceptions, the *Mystic Way*. The mystical life, according to the established conception, has definite stages or periods of development. They cannot always be detached from each other, nor do they always come in the same order; yet they are, on the whole, readily distinguished.

I

There are four more or less distinct stages of progress in the Mystic Way: Awakening, Purification (Purgation), Illumination, Unification. The first and second of these stages are sometimes treated as one. Thus the author of the Theologia Germanica writes: "Now be assured that no one can be enlightened unless he

be first cleansed or purified, and stripped. So also no one can be united with God unless he be first enlightened. Thus there are three stages: First, the purification; secondly, the enlightening; thirdly, the union."

The mystic awakening of the soul is, as the term indicates, a sometimes sudden, sometimes gradual opening of the inner eye of the soul to a transcendent reality. The manner of this awakening, the exact form in which this new experience presents itself, is as varied as are the individuals who experience it. To Paul it was a blinding revelation of Jesus. To Augustine it was a complete break with a pagan and sensual life, and a self-dedication to the new life in Christ. To Dante it was a revelation of heavenly beauty, the dawn of love. To Saint Francis it was a call of Christ and an espousal of Lady Poverty for his sake. To Catherine of Siena and to Madame Guyon it was a "wound of love." To Henry Suso it was a call of the Eternal Wisdom.

The new life brings with it a certain summons to action, to self-discipline, a process of bringing the self into harmony with this newly learned Reality. This is what is known as Purgation, or the Purgative Way. It is the principle of Detachment found in the Bhagavad Gita. The self must be purged of its selfish-

ness; its devotion to sense and the material world must be broken. Hence we find, in the case of many of the greatest mystics, the most severe and often torturing self-discipline. The devoted Henry Suso, who at the age of eighteen experienced his "commencement" and "turned wholly from things," went through harrowing self-tortures. A garment filled with pointed brass nails caused him intense agony, especially in summer, and when he tried to sleep he would cry out, "O gentle God, what a dying is this!" This, with a cross of protruding nails which he wore on his back day and night, and his other instruments of torture made a terrible armament of purification. Yet the time came when he cast them all aside. "On a certain Whitsun day a heavenly messenger appeared to him and ordered him in God's name to continue it no more. He at once ceased and threw all the instruments of his suffering (irons, nails, hair-shirt, etc.) into a river."[1] Catherine of Genoa refused herself all food that she liked. Madame Guyon wore girdles of hair and held wormwood in her mouth.

How far these self-denials and asceticisms really furthered the life of the spirit it is difficult to say. The motive certainly was a high one whatever may be true of the method.

[1] See Underhill, Mysticism, p. 263.

Jacob Boehme's experience is suggestive. "I began," he says, "to fight a hard battle against my corrupted nature. Now, while I was wrestling and battling, being aided by God, a wonderful light arose within my soul. It was a light entirely foreign to my unruly nature, but in it I recognized the true nature of God and man, and the relation existing between them, a thing which heretofore I had never understood, and for which I would never have sought."[2]

Whatever the place of this discipline and the method of self-conquest, it is certain that every one who would live the higher life must fight his battles with himself and learn to master his appetites and inclinations. When once this mastery over the lower self is won, then the relation of the senses to the spirit takes a new aspect. "You must tame the Green Lion before you give him wings," as Miss Underhill finely says. Those who have at length conquered themselves may, often do, find a new value in the sense world, discovering in it a medium for the spirit life unrecognized before. Having mastered the sense world, they find its spiritual meanings. But this the older mystics largely failed to realize.

To the soul that has thus entered the Mystic

[2] Underhill, Mysticism, p. 273.

Way and is striving to be true to the heavenly vision come glimpses, revealings, "openings." This is the stage of *Illumination*. Many and diverse are these visitations. Sometimes they take the form of mental insight and clarity which make truth most vivid and real. Texts of Scripture stand out in peculiar light and beauty. Sometimes they make themselves felt as a great surging of love in the heart. Sometimes they take the form of visions. Often these come with great suddenness: "Straightway," exclaims the Seer of Revelation, "I was in the spirit: and behold——." Suso, who went through great sufferings in self-purgation, experienced equally intense illuminations. One of these he describes (he always refers to himself in the third person) as follows:

> He was alone after his midday meal, undergoing a severe suffering. Of a sudden he saw and heard what no tongue can express. What he saw was without form or shape, and yet had in itself the beauty of all forms and all shapes. He felt the sweetness of eternal life in calm and silence. This experience lasted an hour or less, and when he came to himself again he felt that he had come back from another world and he was still full of divine joy, and felt himself as light as if he were soaring in the air.[3]

[3] R. M. Jones, *Op. cit.*, p. 283.

Often these illuminations are closely related to nature. Such was the case with Saint Francis. Miss Underhill gives a charming description of Rose of Lima, the Peruvian saint, and her duet of praise with the little bird. These joyous illuminations and visitations of the mystics are neither lawless nor meaningless. They come usually as the result of long and earnest contemplation. They follow psychological laws. Nor are they useless. They mean much for life. In the light of them the mystic goes on his way rejoicing. They impart to him new power for life and service.

Beautiful and ennobling as are the revelations which characterize enlightenment, it is not the final stage of mysticism. Those who never get further than this do not reach the goal. Blessed as are the illuminated, they are not yet stable, ripe, fruitful. Only as they reach the *Unitive Life* are they one with God. They then become centers of life in themselves. They abide, as the branch in the vine. Therefore they bring forth fruit. To reach this stage involves much of persevering progress, often deep agony and suffering. To attain it one may have to pass through the "Dark Night of the Soul." But when once attained it is the abundant life. Peace and power, strength and joy, attend it.

One of the chief characteristics of the unitive life is its serenity. To one who has reached this state of inner calm and peace, the circumstances and conditions of the outward life are of little concern. Dwelling in the secret place of the Most High, he abides under the shadow of the Almighty.

The unitive life may seem to be only a monotone. It is open to the charge of "automatism." "The worshiper who persists in the contemplation of the whole, thinking to establish himself permanently in the immediate presence of God, becomes an automaton, precisely as the determined worker becomes a machine," says Hocking;[4] and he instances Madame Guyon. This criticism applies, however, to the quietistic form of mysticism only. The Spirit-filled life of the unitive mystic is neither automatic nor apathetic. It is characterized by a freedom that has gotten beyond friction, a calm that has transcended storm.

A word should be added concerning that indescribable mystical experience so often referred to in mystical literature—in which the pilgrim passes over the highest summits, so to speak, of the Mystic Way—*Ecstasy*, or Rapture. Ecstasy is defined by Inge as follows:

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[4] The Meaning of God, p. 425.

> Ecstasy, or vision, begins when thought ceases, *to our consciousness*, to proceed from ourselves. It differs from dreaming, because the subject is awake. It differs from hallucination, because there is no organic disturbance: it is, or claims to be, a temporary enhancement, not a partial disintegration, of the mental faculties. Lastly, it differs from poetical inspiration, because the imagination is passive.[5]

This description applies to the simpler or lower forms of ecstasy rather than to the more extreme form in which it passes into trance, accompanied by unconsciousness, partial or complete.

The cause of ecstasy seems to have been, not so much contemplation as love. "By love He may be gotten and holden, but by thought never," said Plotinus.[6] Catherine of Genoa's ecstasies are described as follows:

> She would remain as though dead for six hours; but on being called to the doing of any duty, however trifling it might be, she would instantly arise and respond, and go about the doing of this her obligation. . . . And coming thus forth from her hiding place she would have her face flushed so as to look like a cherub, and to seem to have upon her lips the "Who then

[5] Inge: *Op. cit.*, p. 14.
[6] See Underhill: Mysticism, p. 445.

shall separate me from the love of Christ?" of the glorious apostle.[7]

II

Whatever may be said of the exaggerated forms and colors which mediæval mysticism gave to these mystical stages, they seem to be based upon laws of spiritual experience. They constitute "a sequence of psychological states."[8] It will not be difficult, by probing a little the religious life of our own day, to see how at its best it conforms to the same stages, or, rather, how the stages represent roughly the normal development of the spiritual life even under modern conditions.[9]

Awakening is as real an experience now as ever. Two independent factors have laid new emphasis upon religious awakening, or the new birth, within recent years. One is the study of religious psychology and the other is the growing interest in Oriental and in cosmic mysticism. Everything that draws away interest from the material realm to the spiritual is, of course, bound to emphasize the need of passing from

[7] Von Hügel: The Mystical Element of Religion, vol. i, p. 140.

[8] A phrase used by Miss Underhill in the preface to her volume, The Mystic Way, q.v.

[9] I find myself differing somewhat from Professor R. M. Jones's criticism of the Mystic Way in his article in The Harvard Theological Review (April, 1915). The conception seems to me of permanent value, if regarded as I have indicated.

the one into the other. In whatever light the new life is conceived, there must be a turning away in penitence and contrition from the domination of sense and selfishness and a rebirth into the world of spirit. The eye of the spirit must open upon those realities which the eye of the body cannot see. The experience we call *conversion* has often been sadly distorted, but in its genuine form it emphasizes the part which the will plays in the change. Yet the act of the will is less prominent in mysticism than the spiritual enlightenment. Recall, for example, those memorable words in which Fox described his entrance into the light:

> I heard a voice which said, "There is one, even Jesus Christ, that can speak to thy condition." And when I heard it my heart did leap for joy.

An interesting modern instance of awakening of a very normal and quiet kind, is that of the late John Bigelow, of New York, long an eminent citizen, who, during an enforced detention in the island of Saint Thomas, became acquainted with the writings of Swedenborg and through them had his eyes opened to the spiritual meaning of the Bible, of nature, and of life itself. In closing his account of this experience as related in his interesting volume,

The Bible that Was Lost and Is Found, Mr. Bigelow writes:

> Why, I ask, all these incidents, none of which would have occurred to me if I could have had my own way, unless it was necessary to make me lie down to sleep like Jacob upon a pillow of stone, that when I should awake I might be ready to exclaim: "Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it."

A very different and far more dramatic modern instance of awakening is that of Helen R. Albee, related in her book, The Gleam. One of the incidents connected with her entrance into a larger life was associated with automatic writing, a practice which she admits to be questionable:

> After a good deal of preliminary writing one evening my pencil remained stationary for a period and then suddenly questioned if I felt myself prepared to enter upon the future life. I replied: "No, indeed. I am just getting ready to live. I have given years to study and preparation for future work in design, and all that would be sheer waste if I pass out now." Then it wrote "Your work that you value so highly is of no real consequence. . . . It has no value whatever," it repeated, "for the reason that you are only serving self in it all. You

> fancy you are working for others, but in your secret heart you are desiring to do some great thing, something unusual, and in your concentrated effort to serve that end you are ignoring very obvious duties; you neglect the little things, the small kindness and thought of others; these are what make up the whole of life.". . . Mortifying as it was, I could not protest, for it was quite true, though I had never guessed it; and for hours that night I stood before the bar of judgment and faced my mean little soul with its petty self-seeking, its evasion of everything that was unpleasant. . . . It was a terrible hour of revelation, and well deserved. . . . That was the birth night of a new and higher existence.[10]

To-day the theosophist and the poet are insisting, though in very different ways, upon that need of the new birth of which the church has been saying so much less. Even in such books as Bucke's Cosmic Consciousness great stress is laid upon the mystic experience by which one enters into the larger consciousness. Indeed, Dr. Bucke takes as the motto, or text, of his volume the familiar words, "Verily I say unto you, except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The second stage, *Purgation* or Purification

[10] The Gleam, pp. 78, 79.

(for which the Greek term *catharsis* is sometimes used), is also essential to spiritual living in any age. It is the discipline by which the spiritual nature gains control of the physical, and thus develops a true personality. Of this necessity, Christian mysticism from the very beginning took a firm hold. Only, unfortunately, it put too much emphasis upon an arbitrary and repressive method of purification—asceticism. In spite of its unnatural character, asceticism undoubtedly produced some admirable, terribly admirable, effects. But it quite missed a fact which the modern mind is coming thoroughly to understand, namely, that *life itself, rightly lived, offers the best and most normal means of purification.*[11] Here, right at hand, in daily living, without fleeing to the desert or retreating to the monastery, without the use of fasting or hair shirt, mortification or flagellation, in everyday duties and disciplines, lies the divinely ordained corrective of the flesh. Here is ample training for the spirit.

Protestantism, speaking broadly, overthrew the ascetic ideal and substituted for it the conception of life as furnishing its own discipline in holiness. Of this release and advance,

[11] This is not to say that the mystics as a whole neglected the common duties of life, including civil and social duties, or failed to see disciplinary values in them. The mystics of the Rhine, especially Eckhart and Tauler, had much to say in their sermons of the common duties of everyday life.

Luther, more than any other, was the prophet and leader. It was his wholesome and manly piety that enabled him to see that the devout and self-denying facing of common life with its toil and trial, its searching tests and temptations, is the best and truest possible purgation. But Luther only half succeeded in inculcating this truth. The lesson has been slow in learning. It is strange that with the example and teaching of Jesus, reproduced in Paul, so sun-clear in this respect, the ascetic ideal could ever have gained so firm a hold on Christianity. Even in Protestantism, in a modified form the ascetic ideal has been incorrigibly persistent.

Only in our own generation have Christians come to see that asceticism has no place in Christian life, and that the necessary element in spiritual life which it strove to secure lies in the very circumstances and conditions of human existence, when rightly understood and used. Living itself is an ascetic discipline, a school of personality. If one may venture to alter a classic line in the direction of its writer's own teaching, "Life's a *school*, and all the men and women simply scholars." There are truants in this, as in every school—those who refuse to get its lessons, those who hate it, those who fail to see what it is for and what it can do for them. Yet the great school of life goes steadily

on. It keeps every day. Its stern, relentless, yet rewarding lessons are daily shirked, despised, misunderstood by some, conned and loved by others. On the whole, as Dr. MacLure observed of life in Drumtochty, "it's doing its wark weel"—although it takes a mystic to see it.

Work, for instance, is a masterly purgation. Humanity has been laboring and sweating and protesting for countless generations and has not yet fully learned that toil, instead of a curse, is a purifying and saving grace, a purgation, a masked blessing. Yet work is also very much more than a purgation. On its finer side it is a species of devotion, a form of active contemplation. It has been made a curse, it is true, by excess and wrong conditions and bitterness of spirit, but in itself it is an angel of purifying in rough guise. Consider the effect upon character of having to rise for work at a given hour (if only it be not *every* morning in the week) and of having a family to care for. Watch the influence of idleness on the average man and then the purifying effect of a return to work. Study the effect of responsibility. Take a careless, worthless young fellow and make him a motorman or a conductor and observe the change in him. Put a light-headed young woman in charge of a school, or a class, and note the effect. Could any asceticism

accomplish transformations so purifying as do these and similar responsibilities?

Consider the effect upon character of scientific investigation, with its chivalrous, devoted, almost ascetic intensity of application. Science is but one of the new forms of purgation,—easy because chosen. The exquisite tortures attending present-day "improved" methods of living, in their demands upon patience and consideration and composure, are surely rich enough in disciplinary values. Is not the telephone as stinging as the hair shirt, the book-agent as flagellation? Does one need to fast if he can accept graciously the discovery that the cook has burned the soup, or left the seasoning out of the dessert? Need one sleep on a bare board if he can endure without inner cursing the after-midnight dance in his neighbor's house? We do not need to seek occasions of discipline of the flesh; life brings enough of them in its train. The trouble, one might almost say the tragedy, is that we fail to take these things religiously, mystically, spiritually, so that the product, instead of a disciplined and seasoned character, is too often, in slang phrase, only "jasm."[12]

It was a most serious mistake of mediævalism

[12] A distinguished theologian describes "jasm" as the effect produced when a saw comes in contact with a nail.

to elevate the monastic life above the family life, as a school of godliness, for of all exacting, probing, protean, yet infinitely enriching disciplines, the bringing up of children—that modern heroism from which so many shrink—is the most perfect. Then there is the never-ending discipline of learning to get on with people, adapting oneself in love to all the faults, idiosyncrasies, and notions that differ from your own, in the people about you. "The Art of Living Together" produces many a human masterpiece and many a consummate artist.

Turn from these lesser, but by no means negligible substitutes for asceticism, to the more overwhelming disciplines—the disasters and ills which sweep over us. What does anything that we can do to ourselves, to wean our sluggish wills from too close attachment to the world, amount to beside these "acts of God"? They are acts of nature rather than of God, or his only as belonging to a world that is his. And yet he comes near to us in them, as a mother to an injured child. Henry Suso discovered that his self-inflictions were as nothing beside those appointed to him by Providence. The "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" strike down one's self-confidence most effectually. If a man thinketh himself to be something when he is nothing,

these experiences will undeceive him. As a tree in the storm, so we are bowed down to the ground and all the pride and self-assurance taken from us. Failure, loss, illness, bereavement—are they good for us or not? The mystic is assured that they are, and searches diligently for that realization of Infinite Love which can come only in the "dark night of the soul." For him light never fails to arise in darkness.

> The dark comes down about us, but a star
> Beckons beyond, beyond the thing we are.[13]

Not that the mystic necessarily holds that the dark and the storm are sent by God and that the lightning javelins of fate are hurled by his hand. Evangelicalism went too far in that direction. It bore down upon the victim, often when his heart was sorest and his mind most full of questioning, and insisted that he take the disaster as the direct act of God, with the implication also of its punitive intent. The mystic has not urged this interpretation. He has turned, rather, to the possibilities of purification and perfection enwrapped in trouble, and found them—not always at once, but in the end—incomparably rich and wonderful.

[13] John Galen Howard: Grasmere, p. 23.

III

Awakening and Purgation are thus seen to be permanent factors in religious experien e, as valid and essential to-day as ever. So also is *Illumination.*

Our knowledge of the breadth and meaning of illumination is extending constantly. The records of religious experience are full of instances of it in various forms and degrees. I have on my table the unpublished journal of one of the pioneer missionaries of California—a man who fulfilled a long and splendid service of institution-building on the Pacific coast—in which is the following entry, under date of December 26, 1856:

> Light! Light! . . . That the sense of "no condemnation" belongs to anyone as soon as he is in Christ Jesus—then he is born into liberty, translated out of legality into *Christian* liberty. This seems now to be light to me. It seems at this moment to reconcile the struggles of life, struggles under much darkness and bondage. . . . I record this view now this day as I perceive it, that I may survey the truth on all sides, and if this is a true standpoint, it is practically (though not theoretically altogether) new to me.

There is no reason for regarding illumination

as confined to a specifically churchly experience. If we as personal spirits belong to a spiritual world which impinges upon the physical world, why should not the consciousness of that larger world be not only an underlying element of our general consciousness, but also at times assume an especial intensity? Why should not the spiritual order at times come to control and illuminate our total consciousness with such vividness that we realize, as we do not on ordinary levels, its reality and supremacy?

The capacity for such illumination is by no means confined to saints, or mystics of the first degree, although in their case, naturally, it is more intense and dramatic. On the contrary, there is ample evidence for believing that susceptibility to illumination is a *human* capacity, varying almost infinitely in degree and manner of expression, the treasure of the humble, as well as the shekinah of the saint, slumbering in us all, awaiting only the effect of a releasing touch to assert itself and raise us into the fellowship of the *illuminati.*

Yet how little is the capacity realized! When we look about for the reason why illumination of a normal sort is not more general, the explanation is not far to seek. With customary penetration, William James pointed out one

reason for it in the force of the inhibition which many persons place upon the exercise of the mystic capacity.

> Their religious faculties may be checked in their natural tendency to expand, by beliefs about the world that are inhibitive, the pessimistic and materialistic beliefs, for example, within which so many good souls, who in former times would have freely indulged their religious propensities, find themselves, as it were, frozen; or the agnostic vetoes upon faith as something weak and shameful, under which so many of us to-day lie cowering, afraid to use our instincts.[14]

When the religious capacity is thus "inhibited," "frozen," "vetoed," as if it were something to be ashamed of—a weak and childish credulity to be repressed and smothered—what wonder that not only the man of the world but sometimes the man of the cloth also thinks it the part of rationality and robustness to take the sceptical or patronizing attitude toward a religion of the heart, not only shutting himself out of the mysteries of the Kingdom but keeping others out also? Yet still the gates of the mystic city are open day and night, the

[14] Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 204.

visitations of truth and beauty come to the pure in heart, and the meek inherit not only heaven but earth.

Often these illuminations come in the form of guidance and direction in the more delicate and critical affairs of life. A friend of mine, a teacher, in perplexity over what to say to a pupil whom she saw to be going wrong, concentrated her mind in prayer for guidance and heard a voice, distinct though not audible, say the one word, "Wait." She waited and won. Another friend has just solved a vital issue in life in the full sense of spiritual guidance. Such experiences are doubtless especially strong assertions of the moral sense and judgment, but that does not prevent their being something more.

IV

Finally, the unitive life, *unio mystica*, so far from being an extreme and impossible flight of the religious imagination, may be, in its fundamental principle, a normal and realizable experience. If we are children of God anything less than spiritual union with him would be less than the true goal. And, if so, the way to that goal cannot be a smooth and easy path. One may come into the consciousness of the Divine Love early, naturally, swiftly, but to

reach anything like full realization of it, to attain those heights of serenity and calm where one can take life and all its experiences with perfect equanimity, abiding in the Divine as the branch abides in the Vine, that cannot be an easy matter. The great mystics seem almost out of sight as we look up at them moving toward these summits. But perhaps they made the way too steep, the ladder too high. At all events there may be a consciousness of harmony with God—better, perhaps, called *unison*—which is most normal and which many a saintly character in the knowledge of all of us has attained.

We may even ask whether that exceptional mystical experience, the so-called *Ecstasy*, or *Rapture*, is, after all, quite so remote and unallied as both the mystics themselves and their biographers have sometimes assumed it to be.[15] I am thinking now, not of the psychological phenomena of self-hypnotism, coma, etc., but of forms of experience of a far less abnormal character. Is there not something closely approaching ecstasy, for instance—as

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[15] Writing of ecstasy, Inge says: "I regard these experiences as neither more or less 'supernatural' than other mental phenomena. Many of them are certainly pathological; about others we may feel doubts; but some have every right to be considered as real irradiations of the soul from 'the light that forever shines,' real notes of the 'harmony that is in immortal souls' " (Christian Mysticism, p. 18).

Fleming suggests—in canto xcv of the "In Memoriam," or—as Inge points out—in Wordsworth's description of the

> Serene and blessed mood
> In which the breath of this corporeal frame,
> And even the motion of our human blood,
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
> In body and become a living soul
> And see into the life of things.

Coleridge's "Hymn before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamounix" suggests something approaching rapture in such lines as:

> Till the dilating soul, enrapt, transfused,
> Into the mighty vision passing—there
> As in her natural form, swelled vast to Heaven.

Certainly, Charles G. Finney's experience was hardly less than an ecstasy when he sat alone in his office and felt the love of God roll over him in waves. James Russell Lowell recounts in one of his letters, reproduced by William James, an experience that seems to fall not very far short of ecstasy:

> As I was speaking [on spiritual matters] the whole system rose up before me like a vague destiny looming from the abyss. I never before so clearly felt the Spirit of God in me and around me. The whole room seemed to me

> full of God. The air seemed to waver to and fro with the presence of Something, I know not what. I spoke with the calmness and clearness of a prophet.[16]

In many of these experiences there is lacking the sense of an intensely intimate realization of the Divine Personality such as appears in Paul's conversion, or in Dante's beatific vision, or in the trances of Saint Teresa and Saint Catherine. There is more in them of the cosmic sense that has come into our modern thought; and yet that does not mean that this consciousness is out of keeping with Reality as Personal.

One would not wish in any wise to belittle the thrilling and solemn raptures of the mediæval saints; and yet it is quite possible that they have been too far segregated and canonized. May there not be minor, as well as major, ecstasies, in which the soul receives, not all the raptures of seraphic saintliness, but enough of the breath of the Spirit to waft it for a brief moment out upon the ocean of the infinite, where it is caught away from itself into communion with the Eternal? It is well to remember that the trance, which so often attended ecstasy, bore a supernatural aspect to the mediæval mind which it has lost to us.

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[16] Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 66.

V

Have we essayed a vain undertaking in attempting to bridge the gap between these far-away saints, mounting their high and stony way toward the Perfect, and the saints of our own days treading their humbler, more prosaic pathway? Must we put down "the saints of old" as neurotics and extremists and our present-day saints as no saints at all? It is useless to attempt to ignore the wide chasm between their intrepid, other-worldly, sense-scorning, world-repressing piety and that of our own time. And yet, may it not be that the partakers of the mystic life to-day are so far one with them that "they without us should not be made perfect."[17] These skyey saints were doubtless far more human than a distant view of them reveals. Had they not "eyes, hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions"? And have not we men of to-day, even in our "brassy bosoms and rough hearts of flint," something of the incipient qualities of sainthood? If you prick us with the reproach of an unrealized

[17] Since writing the above I find that A. B. Sharpe, Roman Catholic though he is, after setting apart the mystics as having a supernatural experience peculiar to themselves, nevertheless finds himself compelled to ask whether, after all, the ordinary Christian does not share something of their experience. He concludes: "It can hardly be denied that an aspect which it is difficult to distinguish from that of genuine mysticism seems at times to belong to some of the inward experiences of ordinary persons who have no thought or knowledge of the contemplative life" (Mysticism, p. 191).

ideal, do we not bleed? If a sunset smites us with the glory that never was on land or sea, do we not yearn? If a noble, sacrificial, love-lit character crosses our pathway, do we not long to be like him? Are men so earthly, after all, as we have thought,

> "Finished and finite clods, untroubled by
> a spark"?

Such is not the conviction of our better moments.

> Our soul, in its rose-mesh
> Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest.

And not for rest only. Life will not let us rest content upon the lower levels. Something, or Someone, is ever calling us to higher aims and nobler ideals.

CHAPTER II

HEALTH MYSTICISM

THE mystic has always felt the close intimacy of the soul and the body as a challenge. It has appealed to him, not so much in the light of a problem to be solved as an issue to be met. He knows that body and spirit are not one and the same, but distinct. Nothing is more certain to him than that. Yet at every moment he feels how closely they are united. How to bring the two into right relations and keep them so has ever been to him a task of supreme moment. Mysticism has frequently attempted to accomplish this by means of a process of discipline (*askesis*). This was the idea of the hermits. Anthony and his successors looked upon asceticism as an exercise, a kind of spiritual athletics. The founders of monasticism adopted the same view. The physical life, they felt, was too assertive. It stood in the way of spiritual life; cramped it, blocked it, would not let it come to its own. "When the stomach is full of meat," said Paul the Hermit, "forthwith the great vices bubble out."[1] The

[1] Charles Kingsley: The Hermits, p. 102 (Sunday Library Edition).

body, though a creation of God, was regarded as more or less given over into the sway of Satan. Therefore, in order to live the spirit life, the body must be denied, its appetites and desires suppressed.

I

The asceticism of the past can hardly be understood unless we take into account the contrast between the physical, and especially the nervous, robustness of those generations and our own.

In respect to nervous sensitiveness, the European and American have passed through a development, or a degeneration—as one chooses to look at it—within, say five generations, whose extent and consequences we fail to realize. Disease has been reduced, hygienic living promoted and life greatly prolonged, especially within the last century. At the same time, the nervous system has become more delicate and easily disturbed, neurasthenia and all forms of nervous disorder have increased, and we find ourselves almost of another stuff from our remote ancestors in our physical constitution. We forget this in reading history and in objectifying the life of the past and shudder, more perhaps than we need, at conditions of cruelty and suffering, terrible

enough, to be sure, but producing far less acute anguish than would be the case if they existed to-day. From the point of view of ability to cope with our physical environment, this high nervous development is doubtless a loss; but from the point of view of mental and spiritual susceptibility and acuteness, except where it has become abnormal, it is an inestimable gain. Stolidity, with all its dull and heavy encumbrance to the higher life, is disappearing. The effect upon the religious life is apparent. A religion to appeal to the type of mind associated with a highly refined and sensitive physical organism must be of a kind capable of adjustment to its needs. If it prescribes severities and asceticisms to a constitution too refined to bear them, it will alienate and stunt, rather than call out and strengthen, the inner life. This is the case with respect to asceticism in our day as contrasted with the past.

Probably no one has so graphically painted this contrast as Francis Thompson, the mystical poet, in his suggestive little book Health and Holiness, from which we take the following:

> To our generation uncompromising facts and severities of conduct are found to be piteously alien; not because, as rash censors say, we are too luxurious, but because we are too nervous, intricate, devitalized. We find our austerities

ready-made. The east wind has replaced the discipline, dyspepsia, the hair shirt. Either may inflict a more sensitive agony than a lusty anchorite suffered from lashing himself to blood. It grows a vain thing for us to mortify the appetite—would we had the appetite to mortify!—macerate an evanescing flesh, bring down a body all too untimely spent and forewearied, a body which our liberal-lived sires have transmitted to us quite effectually brought down. The pride of life is no more; to live is itself an ascetic exercise; we require spurs to being, not a snaffle to rein back the ardor of being. . . . It was not so with our fortunate (or at least earth-happier) ancestors. For them doubtless the old idea worked roughly well. They lashed themselves with chains; they went about in the most frightful forms of hair shirt, which grew stiffened with their blood, and yet were unrestingly energetic. . . . This implies a constitution we can but dimly conjecture, to which austerity, so to speak, was a wholesome antidote.[2]

There is, of course, much of poetic license as well as of overgeneralization in such a statement; and yet, there is so much too that is pertinent in it that even the Roman Church has put upon it its *imprimatur*.

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[2] Health and Holiness; A Study of the Relations between Brother Ass, the Body, and his Rider, the Soul, pp. 21–23.

II

The mystics of the past felt the necessity of suppressing the body. To-day another need has appeared. The body needs reenforcement, in order to meet the demands of the spirit. Accordingly, there has arisen a new type of mysticism, whose emphasis is upon *health*, the toning up of the body, just as the emphasis of mediæval mysticism was upon *asceticism*, the toning down of the body. The rise and rapid development of this new health mysticism is one of the most extraordinary phenomena in the religious life of our time. And yet it might have been foreseen. At least the rise of some new form of mysticism might have been anticipated as a reaction from the prevailing externalism, *orthodoxism-versus-liberalism*, and denominationalism of the American churches. For generations the church has been inviting the paralysis which has now seized her by devoting herself all too largely to mere church propagandism, losing her life message in shibboleths, showing more concern for herself than for humanity. From this selfishness there are signs that she is now waking. Meanwhile she has very largely lost not only the laboring people, but many educated people who are longing for a spiritual life they are failing to find in the church. Hence the rise of the new mystic cults.

The new Health Mysticism, made up of Christian Science, the New Thought, Theosophy, and kindred cults, is a singular composite. A writer in the Hibbert Journal, Mrs. Stuart Moore, gives its constituents as follows: "To mingle Buddhism, Christianity, magic, physical culture, and feeble metaphysics and make with these ingredients a faith whose chief rewards shall be health and wealth—heaven here and now indeed—seems a considerable task; but the Higher Thought has managed it."[3] William James analyzed its contents as follows: the four Gospels, Emersonianism, Berkeleyan idealism, spiritism, popular science, evolutionism, and Hinduism.[4] To these should be added the new psychology. James reached the well-known conclusion that "the spread of the movement has been due to practical fruits, and the extremely practical turn of the American people has never been better shown than by the fact that this, their only decidedly original contribution to the systematic philosophy of life, should be so intimately knit up with concrete therapeutics."[5]

Next to its "concrete therapeutics," the most marked feature of the movement is its diluted metaphysics. This appears especially in Mrs.

[3] Magic and Mysticism of To-day, vol. vi, 2, p. 381
[4] Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 94.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 96.

Eddy's Science and Health. If it were mere metaphysics, it would, of course, have no standing, but it is metaphysics devoted to a practical end. As such it has power, because it has seized a great truth, however crudely, and turned it to religious uses. It is much the same truth that Dionysius and Erigena and Eckhart laid hold of from Neoplatonism and that through them prevailed among the mystics of earlier ages—the doctrine of the Absolute as the Fundamental Reality. To come into relation with this Reality, to realize its presence and its power, and thus to escape the poverty and loneliness and weakness of our separate lives—this (next to concrete therapeutics) is the main object of the new cults, as it has been of mysticism in all the ages. "That great central fact in human life," says Ralph Waldo Trine in his In Tune with the Infinite, "in your life and in mine is the coming into a conscious, vital realization of our oneness with this Infinite Life, and the opening of ourselves to this Divine overflow." Nor is it an unreasonable assumption that such unison with the Infinite *normalizes* the *physical self* and brings it into accord with the spirit life. Thus Brother Ass turns to a Pegasus and bears the soul onward with winged ease. Psychology has given its unqualified testimony to the beneficial effects

of a religiously composed temper upon both brain and body. Thus far, at least, the new health mysticism has a true *raison d'être.*

III

Everyone who cares for the furtherance of the spiritual life has reason to hail this recent mushroom mysticism, as a fresh indication of the unquenchable longing of the human heart for the Infinite. Through it thousands have found their way into fellowship with the Love that will not let us go. By its fruits we may know it. The very last to condemn Christian Science or New Thought should be the church. If it has done what the church has failed to do for myriads of persons, she should be glad and ask why. If, in so many lives, trust and gentleness and kindness have taken the place of fear and selfishness and discontent, a cause should be looked for adequate to the results. Men do not gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles. It is difficult to overestimate the blessing which this movement has brought to many lives in driving away fear and false sorrow. Yet this is nothing peculiar or new. For instance, from the diary of Father John, a priest of the Eastern Church, "known and served in every nook of Russia," comes this testimony to the power of the Divine Presence:

"Sorrow is the death of the heart and is a falling away from God. The expansion, the peace of head and heart through lively faith in him proves more clearly than the day that God is constantly present near me and that he dwells within me."[6] Some grasp must have been made by these cults of divine laws and forces. Let us inquire a little further into their secret.

We have already found that the power of these mystic cults lies in the realization of the Absolute as a power in human life, though it is associated by them with so crude and imperfect a metaphysic. But superficial and sonorous as is their metaphysic, they have learned the lesson for which pragmatism has risen up to rebuke philosophic idealism and have *put their metaphysical creed at work.* They have said in effect to "high-browed" philosophical idealism: You have long been familiar with the idea of the Absolute, but you have treated it too much as your own possession; you have discussed it and played with it and never found any life values in it or given it to your fellow men to help them in their lives. We, on the other hand, have at least tested its values. We have said to suffering, hard-pressed men and women: The Infinite is real; avail yourselves of it, realize it, rest in it.

[6] My Life in Christ, p. 10.

Surely, this is rational, logical, and thoroughly worth while. This is the way to use truth and to prove it to be truth, though not the way to make it truth. For this we may thank the new mysticism and challenge philosophy, as did William James, to come down from the heights and make itself felt in everyday life. Naturalistic and mechanistic theories will find it hard to overthrow the adherents of Christian Science and New Thought. They have found a satisfying reality and have afforded a new demonstration of the security and power of the spirit life.

IV

Why not, then, welcome this rest-in-the-Absolute, health-happiness, Hindu-Emersonian mysticism as the spiritual enlightenment and reenforcement that we so greatly need to-day? If it has laid hold of vital truth and demonstrated its salutary effects, why not turn to it as a finality?

In the first place, because of its intellectual weakness and heterogeneity. It has neither the depth and earnestness of Hinduism, nor the breadth and poise of Emersonianism, nor the keenness and insight of Berkeleyanism. There have been no creative minds connected with it. Science and Health is too crude a piece of

metaphysical mechanics to impress any but the neophyte. The system of Dionysius, or Erigena, or Jacob Boehme towers above the writings of this school as a Gothic cathedral above a doll-house. Not that there are not thoughtful writers who have contributed to it, and thoughtful people who have been drawn to it. Indeed, it takes a certain above-the-average grade of intelligence to get anything from this new mysticism. But it has neither the strength of true simplicity nor the wealth of true profundity. A faith to satisfy the heart must not offend the head. Mysticism is first of all an experience; but unless the experience produces an interpretation that commands the intellect, it argues a limitation in the experience. Either let the new faith be silent, so far as interpretation is concerned, or else let it speak worthily and win our intellectual respect. If it will be metaphysical, let it rise to the level of genuine metaphysics. No one can enter heartily and permanently into a faith with his mind's eye winking at it.

Moreover, the Christian Science-New Thought Mysticism is deficient because of its moral incompetence and one-sidedness. It deliberately chooses to see but one side of life. "To see life steadily and see it whole" is no part of its desire. It closes its eyes to the dark

side of life. This is far better than to make too much of the dark side. But Christianity is braver and broader than this, and dares to look fearlessly and deeply into life as it is, through the eyes of the Christ. Its deceptive rose-coloring of life gives to this entire movement an atmosphere of unreality and *dilettanteism* which removes it from the stern arena of life as it is, and makes of it a parlor philosophy. Not so did the greater mystics look upon life. The optimism of Augustine and Saint Francis, Luther and Wesley, George Fox and John Tauler was of another sort than this. Human evil and sin cannot be driven from life by thinking them away. They must be lived and suffered out of existence. That is a truth that lies close to the heart of Christianity, and its symbol is the cross.

V

Finally, the mysticism we are discussing reveals its inherent inconsistency and shallowness by its inordinate emphasis upon physical health. A mysticism which so confuses and misinterprets values cannot be a consistent mysticism. It is not, as has already been said, that this school is wrong in holding that a mind in harmony with the Infinite may act with almost miraculous effect upon the body.

That was a leading truth in early Christianity, and the church has been guilty of unfaith, as of folly, in losing it.[7] But to make health an *end*, instead of a means, in the life of the spirit is treason to personality.

Mrs. Stuart Moore, though unduly severe in her criticism of this movement, is not without grounds for saying: "A religion such as this, which frankly declares that the first and only concern of the believer is with himself, with the prevention of his own ills, the increase of his own income, the recognition of his own Divine Principle waiting within his own solar plexus . . . is sure at the present time to be popular. It is, of course, the antithesis of mysticism, as the mystics understood that science of love."[8]

The fact is, as the early mystic ascetics saw, that *mere* animal health is as foreign to the spirit life as are infirmity and illness. The best medium for the life of the spirit is neither rampant, irrepressible physical health nor physical pain and weakness, but a steady, controlled, well-expended vitality, a state in which body and spirit are in full accord.

To secure and maintain the physical con-

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[7] For a competent, well-balanced discussion of the relation of healing to the work of the church consult Weaver's Mind and Health, especially the last three chapters.

[8] *Article cit.*, p. 385.

dition in which mind and spirit can reach their highest development and do their best and largest service, should certainly be one of the aims of a true life philosophy. But if the spirit cannot rise above physical conditions and make spiritual harvest of ill-health and infirmity, it has nothing to attest its supremacy. As Robert Louis Stevenson so conclusively put it: "The truest health is to be able to get on without it."

A history of the spiritual development of humanity would show that sickness has played an inestimable part in forwarding religious experience. Loyola, Saint Francis, Luther, Chalmers, John Woolman, Frederick Robertson, R. L. Stevenson, are only random instances of men to whom sickness has been the gateway to a larger life. Brother Lawrence was doubtless an extremist in holding our pains to be tokens of the divine love, but they can be made channels for the reception of the divine love, as well as means of self-development.

In Woolman's Journal is an interesting entry in which he states that having been taken ill, a cry arose in him that he "might know the cause of his affliction and improve under it." Having discerned, as he thought, the cause in "conformity to some customs which I believed were not right," he adds: "Feeling the desire

of further purifying, there was now no desire in me for health until the design of my correction was answered. Thus I lay in abasement and brokenness of spirit, and as I felt a sinking down into a calm resignation, so I felt as in an instant, an inward healing in my nature, and from that time forward I grew better."

Among the purest, bravest, ripest characters in every community are those victorious invalids who are making the largest draughts daily upon the divine grace and power, but who do not get well, and probably never will. For Christian Science practitioners to hold out the promise of health to such saints on the ground of conformity to certain spiritual prescriptions of their own is crass presumption. They should themselves go to such demonstrators of the spirit life to learn what courage and patience, victory over self and invincible trust in the Eternal, mean. *Spiritual health, primary, indispensable, and always attainable; physical health, secondary and desirable, but not always attainable,* is the only principle that conserves spiritual values.

VI

What we need is not so much a new health mysticism as a new heart mysticism, a new influx of love, a freshened sense of the greatness

and joy of life in a world in which infinite resources of power and progress are at work, a new realization of the inestimable worth of personality and the possibilities of personal and social achievement.

It is too late in the day of human progress for humanity to be fooled with superstition or dazzled with an irrational super-naturalism. That which men are hungry for is a sane and heartfelt mysticism.[9] They want contact with spiritual realities. When the doctrinal and ecclesiastical debris is more thoroughly swept away from Christianity it will be found that here, and not in any other religion or cult, new or old, is the satisfaction of the craving of the soul. The mysticism that emanated from Jesus and centers in him as the incarnation of the Divine Spirit has power to rejuvenate our age as it did that Græco-Roman age which ours so much resembles.

Ever since its wane in the second century the mystical element of Christianity has been more or less obscured. It has emerged now and again in restorative movements and in responsive individuals and groups, but only to be again too largely smothered under dogmatism and ecclesiasticism. There are not wanting signs—

[9] It cannot but be evident, even to the outsider, that the hold, for example, of Free Masonry lies largely in the appeal to the mystical.

such as this very uprising of the new health mysticism—that we are on the eve of a fresh realization of mystical truth and power. If so, it will mean the influx of a mighty tide of spiritual life, and with it power for that individual and social advance which awaits some commanding impulse greater than we now are using.

CHAPTER III

COSMIC MYSTICISM

MYSTICISM has been too long regarded as a seven days' wonder, or else ignored as identified with certain bizarre or esoteric doctrines, phenomena, and practices. The time has come to go beneath the surface and try to understand more fully its deeper motives and underlying principles.

I

Not long ago an English army officer of active life, Sir Francis Younghusband, was injured by a motor-car—one of those yet unsubdued foes of mysticism—and suddenly found himself faced with the necessity of adjustment to a new order of experience, a new world. Out of long suffering and reflection came a book from him entitled Within, in which he commented as follows upon the meaning of life:

> Of the existence of a Holy Spirit radiating upward through all animate beings, and finding its fullest expression in man in love, and in the flowers in beauty, we can be as certain as of anything in the world. This fiery spiritual

> impulsion at the center and the source of things, ever burning in us, is the supremely important factor in our existence.[1]

However far Colonel Younghusband's theology may differ from that of the mystics in general, his attitude and conclusions are thoroughly mystical, especially his revised sense of values.

After all, this readjustment of values is the main thing—the turning away from the outward or self-centered life to the inner, and finding there supreme reality and satisfaction. This is the ever-recurrent note in the mysticism of the ages—quiet, deep, wondering joy in the unseen and eternal.

Whether we of to-day have ever had religious experiences at all approaching in intensity those of the great mystics or not, there is a strange sense—strange?—a home feeling, rather—of spiritual reality that comes to most of us at times, accompanying an insight into a world ordinarily closed. "Openings" the mystics sometimes called these experiences. "Fallings from us, vanishings," Wordsworth named them. They are times when, as Plato said, "on a sudden one beholds a beauty wonderful in its nature." These experiences, swift, subtle, inexpressible, vary greatly with different individuals.

[1] Hibbert Journal, vol. xi, 3, p. 690.

Sometimes they are closely associated with nature. I recall, as I write, two descriptions of mystical experience which I have heard from friends, one a vision of Infinite Beauty in the early morning on the shores of a mountain lake, the other occurring on the summit of a peak in the Sierra where there came, in that mountain wilderness such a sense of expansion, of the greatness and glory of Being, that the memory of it has been a vivid and sustaining influence ever since. A similar experience on the seashore is cited by William James, in which the experient expressed herself as follows: "To return from the solitude of individuation into the consciousness of unity with all that is, to kneel down as one that passes away and to rise up as one imperishable. Earth, heaven and sea resounded as in one vast world-encircling harmony."[2] Goethe's experience in the Harz mountains, when, thrilled by the ascent of the Brocken, he cried, "I bring my sacrifice to the Being of all Beings," is a striking instance of nature illumination. "From that time on," says one of his biographers, "he felt himself to be one loved by God and led by God."[3] But it does not require an unusual and impressive

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[2] Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 395.

[3] For a further account of this incident, see Oscar Kuhns's The Sense of the Infinite, p. 60.

scene to awaken these mystical states. They may be connected with some very humble and common thing—a flower by the wayside, a ray of sunshine, a glimpse of blue sky, a bit of symmetry or brightness anywhere.

That sensitive nature mystic Richard Jefries, in The Story of My Heart, describes an experience of his as follows:

> I was utterly alone with the sun and the earth. Lying down on the grass, I spoke in my soul to the earth, the sun, the air, and the distant sea far beyond sight. I thought of the earth's firmness; I felt it bear me up; through the grassy couch there came an influence as if I could feel the great earth speaking to me. I thought of the wandering air, its pureness which is its beauty; the air touched me and gave me something of itself. By all these I prayed; I felt an emotion of the soul beyond all definition. . . . I hid my face in the grass, I was wholly prostrated, I lost myself in the wrestle, I was rapt and carried away. . . . Having drunk deeply of the heaven above and felt the most glorious beauty of the day, and remembering the old, old sea, which (as it seemed to me) was but yonder at the edge, I now became lost, and absorbed into the being or existence of the universe. [Yet this absorption did not involve the loss of selfhood.] Recognizing my own inner consciousness, the psyche [he con-

> tinues], so clearly, death did not seem to me to affect the personality[4]

But these inrushes of feeling and insight are by no means invariably associated with nature. More often still they come through the touch of another personality. It was thus that the disciples of Gautama and those of Jesus and of other great vitalizing personalities received their mystical transformations. Even characters who are far from ideal have been the means of imparting a kind of mystic inspiration by no means momentary in its effects. A person who once made a brief call on Walt Whitman stated that, as a result, he became "plainly different from his ordinary self," and that this brief contact with the poet became a permanent element in his life, "a strong and living force, making for purity and happiness."[5]

The author of Cosmic Consciousness, Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke, who relates the incident concerning Whitman, describes his own illumination as follows:

> It was in the early spring, at the beginning of his thirty-sixth year. [Dr. Bucke speaks of himself in the third person.] He and two friends had spent the evening reading Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Browning, and especially Whit-

[4] See Cosmic Consciousness, pp. 264, 265.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 80.

man. They parted at midnight, and he had a long drive in a hansom [it was in an English city]. His mind, deeply under the influence of the ideas, images, and emotions called up by the reading and talk of the evening, was calm and peaceful. He was in a state of quiet, almost passive enjoyment. All at once, without warning of any kind, he found himself wrapped around, as it were, by a flame-colored cloud. For an instant he thought of fire, some sudden conflagration in the great city; the next he knew that the light was within himself. Directly after came upon him a sense of exultation, of immense joyousness accompanied by, or immediately followed by, an intellectual illumination quite impossible to describe. Into his brain streamed one momentary lightning flash of the Brahmic splendor which has ever since lightened his life; upon his heart fell one drop of Brahmic bliss, leaving thenceforward for always an after taste of heaven. Among other things he did not come to believe, he saw and knew that the Cosmos is not dead matter but a living Presence, that the soul of man is immortal, that the universe is so built and ordered that without any peradventure all things work together for the good of each and all, that the foundation principle of the world is that we call love, and that the happiness of everyone is in the long run absolutely certain.[6]

[6] See Cosmic Consciousness, pp. 7, 8.

II

The accumulating number of experiences of this kind raises a problem which cannot be avoided, namely, how are such transformations as these related to the distinctively Christian mystical experience? Dr. Bucke throws all such experiences together, without distinction or evaluation. Gautama, Jesus, Paul, Plotinus, Dante, Shakespeare (Bacon), Jacob Boehme, Balzac, Walt Whitman, Edward Carpenter share, in his view, the "*cosmic consciousness*"—which he explains in terms of nature and of dual selfhood. The confusion increases when, among the partial experients of cosmic consciousness, he brings together such contrasted children of the Spirit as Gideon and Isaiah, Thoreau and Charles G. Finney, Pascal and Richard Jeffries, Roger Bacon and Spinoza.

There certainly would seem to be a common factor in the experience of all these mystics, however varied; and the list might be indefinitely enlarged. There is the same shift of values from the outer to the inner, from the lower self to the higher, from things to Something back of them. As a result a new light, supernal, spiritual, falls upon everything. There is in all cases a sense of expansion; hope and love assert themselves; optimism rules. The recipient feels that he has passed from death

unto life because he loves—whether it be the brethren, or the race, or the cosmos, or God, or the All.

The lover's tale, at its best, is not far different. In his case there is an elect person who represents all beauty, truth, and goodness, at the center of his experience. Yet this *other* is more than a single individual. The beloved epitomizes all of Being. There is a going forth of soul, not alone to this *one*, but to nature, to humanity, to God. It is an experience that makes all things new and that does not pass with "love's short hours and weeks." If there is any word that expresses the ineffable character, the universality, the other-worldliness of love, it is the word "mystical."

From this whole sphere of experience, however varied in form, the term "religious" can hardly be withheld. It carries us back to the rudimentary forms of primitive religion. In spite of the close relationship to the physical, it belongs to the supernatural; it nourishes the soul; it pertains to the second Adam, the Lord from heaven.[7] This is not saying that every

[7] Roman Catholic theology, of course, excludes all these forms of experience from the rank of true mysticism. Thus, A. B. Sharpe writes: "For a confused consciousness of the divine or the supernatural, as symbolized or suggested by certain fragmentary aspects of nature, or art, or social experience, is at bottom a perfectly different thing from the direct vision of and intercourse with a divine Person. 'I talk not with thy

passing response to the glory of nature, every momentary admiration for a great personality, every skin-deep adoration for a beautiful face is religious. So much deeper than these flitting approximations to it is a real mystical experience, that they seem hardly more than its counterfeits.

III

"Cosmic consciousness" is both mystical and religious. Yet it is hardly the highest mysticism or the noblest religion. Certainly it is not completely Christian. The reason is, I should say, that it stops short of the fully *personal*, both in character and in conception. It is ennobling and releasing to enter into a deep and joyous fellowship with nature, or with human nature, to feel the currents of divine life flowing through the cosmos. Such an experience is not only mentally but (as Dr. Bucke points out) morally ennobling. Both nature love and human love run all through Christian mysticism, as we have seen, as a rich and tender part of it. Who had more of the cosmic consciousness than Saint Francis? The nature communion of that austere Christian

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dreams,' supernatural mysticism replies to the imaginative outpourings of the nature mystic, the philanthropist, or the lover" (Mysticism, pp. 19, 20).

mystic Jonathan Edwards matches Wordsworth's. Both strike deeper notes than are to be found in pantheism. Such nature worship is not *less* than pantheism, but more, and corrects it by transcending it. It is bathed in delight of personal faith.

So too with that communion with one's own deeper self, of which extra-Christian forms of mysticism make so much. Such self-communion is found in wonderful wealth of introspection in Paul. It fills the literature of the Friends of God. It illumines the pages of the Imitation. It appears richly in Jacob Boehme. And yet, in all these and other committed Christian mystics, there is a recognition of the union of that inner self with a Transcendent Self, a consciousness of God, or of an Indwelling Christ, or a Divine Spirit, which is largely lacking in the cosmic mystics—whose new birth, Dr. Bucke insists, must take place in the early months of the year and at the period of the maturity of the natural powers. Such a view looks downward into nature for the genesis of the true self, rather than upward into the realm of pure Personality, where alone its adequate Source can lie. Cosmic consciousness suffices for the sunny day, the periods of health and content; but before some cosmic catastrophe it may suddenly be shivered to atoms, leaving the

soul groping for something more tangible and firm. This has been the experience of more than one possessor of the cosmic consciousness. Cosmic emotion vanishes, and the heart and flesh cry out for the living God. Then it is only the help of his countenance that restores the disquieted soul.

Thus we find in Christian mysticism not so much a repudiation of cosmic mysticism as a fulfillment, an interpretation of it, which takes up its crude, undeveloped, half-pagan insights and impulses and carries them on into the larger light of personality. In this light nature is seen, not as God himself, but as a revelation of God; its beauty the symbolic expression of a Personal Spirit. Love for other persons is seen to involve love of the Supreme Person. The self within us is recognized not as a second ego, but as the Divine within each of us, the *Fünkelein* of a Great Fire above, "Christ in you the hope of glory."

IV

Mystical experiences, more or less completely Christian, are, I am convinced, much more general and frequent than is ordinarily supposed. A considerable number of the men and women in our churches are of the mystical mind, as is revealed in the replies to the ques-

tionnaires in the studies in the psychology of religion. Professor Pratt, in an analysis of one of his questionnaires, found fifty-six out of seventy-seven respondents to be mystics. Trine's policeman, by a vision splendid upon his beat attended, is not found on every street corner, yet our streets might be safer, as well as happier, if he were.[8] We are constantly coming upon the mystically minded, as Wordsworth came upon the leech-gatherer on the lonely moor. A laundry agent once said to me that he had many times on his rounds had such an experience of the presence of God that it had seemed to him as if God were right on the wagon seat with him! The crudeness of the conception and expression of some of these experiences does not affect their validity. If the hearts of many reserved and unexpressive people could be uncovered, who can doubt that many a hidden mystic experience would be revealed, of astonishing tenderness and depth?

The hardest and most impervious persons are susceptible at rare moments to these incursions of a spiritual world. In times of illness, or when the departure of one of those pure spirits who are not far from every one of us brings a softening sense of the pervading pres-

[8] See James: Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 393.

ence of an unseen reality, many a man who seemed to others, and perhaps to himself, but a hard-headed, common-sense practicalist, finds himself in the atmosphere of another world.

The striking fact about these experiences is their intense, supersensuous realism. They make the everyday world of material interests seem unreal and illusive when divorced from this deeper reality. They enthrone the mystic sensibility as the arbiter of reality, making it, as Professor James said, "the function of the mystic sense to distinguish between the real and the seeming, the true and the false, in the realm of the spiritual and physically intangible."[9]

The inclusiveness with which we have swept into the ranks of the mystics so many of the "good, great men" of the race and are now doing the same with the unexceptional and lowly, "lost in love's great unity," makes the query a pertinent one: Who, then, are the *non-mystics?* The only answer we can make, consistent with our entire treatment of the subject, is that the mystical sense, being normal and human, is potentially present in us all. There are no absolutely nonmystical persons except the abnormal and subhuman and those who have made themselves such—men of the

[9] Principles of Psychology, quoted by Weaver: Mind and Health, p. 202.

ilk of Bluebeard, Sancho Panza, Shylock, Richard III, Peter Bell, Uriah Heep, and—shall we add?—"the self-made man." Many a man appears to be harder than a flint until—. Remember Scrooge!

A rheumatic son of France who lives on the hilltop above me, betrays no token of mysticism either in his appearance or his conversation. Yet each Sunday and holiday, as I glance toward his house, I see his adopted flag flying bravely in the breeze and say to myself, "He too is a son of Abraham." Wherever you find idealism, outreach toward the higher life, there is something of the mystical. "From of old," says Schleiermacher, "all truly religious characters have had a mystical trait."[10] Professor James identifies mysticism with faith:

> The operation of the mystic sense is summed up in the simple word "faith.". . . Faith covers the whole working of the mystic sense, provided it is not restricted to a severely religious meaning. In its distinctively religious meaning faith is the operation of the mystic sense in its highest employment. It works amid ideas and ideals. It is at once a supersense and a subsense. The normal use of this sense does not make a man a mystic. The healthily developed man is

[10] Addresses, translated by Oman, p. 132.

> mystical, though not a mystic. His dominating sense is that of the spirit, not that of the flesh.[11]

Just what degree of the mystic sense it takes to make a mystic, James does not say; but the distinction seems to be a just one, though not easily applied. Often one feels a mystical vein in reticent, incommunicative persons and is at a loss to account for it until he chances to see them at work; then the fineness, the skill, the devotion, with which they do their work betrays the secret.

The trouble is that while the mystic sense is so general, so deep-seated, so human, in most persons it is hardly more than germinal.[12] Other qualities are disproportionately developed. Shrewd selfishness, love of ease, the animal nature, is too often uppermost. There is far from enough of the mystical in our literature, our philosophy, our theology, our everyday life. This is not a fault of our day alone; it has always been so. As we look back over the history of human life and thought we can see how the suppression of mysticism in many influential minds has fostered and per-

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[11] Principles of Psychology, vol. ii, pp. 289ff;. quoted by Weaver, Mind and Health, p. 202.

[12] "Man, unless he abdicates his manhood, a task so difficult as to verge on the impossible, must live by his mystic sense; he must keep in touch with the unseen or cease to be a man" (Bishop Brent, The Sixth Sense, p. 87).

petuated hard and repressive types of thought and life. Such relative non-mystics as Pyrrho, Democritus, Hume, Locke, Voltaire, Spencer, in philosophy; Arius, Pelagius, Abelard, Dominic, Socinus, Calvin, the Westminster Divines, Priestley, in theology, although they have served to liberate, clarify, and fortify thought, reveal to us how chill and barren our thought-world would be if such minds alone ruled it, lacking the ardor and insight of mysticism with its

> Desires and Adorations,
> Wingèd Persuasions and veiled Destinies,
> Splendors and Glooms and glimmering Incarnations.[13]

If we owe much to the sharp, clear light of the winter of intellectualism, cutting off so many needless and overluxuriant growths, we owe inestimably more to the warm, tender, summer light of mysticism, in which all that is best blooms and fruits.

V

Personal testimony is perhaps not out of place here. The writer feels bound to break through the reserve with which most of us prefer to guard personal experiences, to state

[13] Shelley, Adonais, canto xiii.

that, though by nature and training an intellectualist, as far back as he can remember he has had what perhaps might be called, if not illuminations, inward exhilarations, bringing with them the deepest sense of reality and inner joy, which, whatever their cause or explanation, have greatly enhanced the meaning and zest of life. Perhaps the best description that could be given of these experiences would be to compare them to the sudden lightening of the sky on a gray day, the falling of the sunshine at your feet, as if it were meant, not for you apart and exclusively, but nevertheless for you as a particular self, with your own power to receive and appropriate its message.

These experiences are accompanied both by clearness of vision and warmth of feeling, as if there were a sudden uncovering of the world of the spirit, letting one see into "the soul of things." In these hours nature becomes not a mere assemblage of outer objects, mute, meaningless, prosaic, but symbolic, lambent with spiritual flame; and men, women, and children not the mere puppets that they often seem, engaged with nonentities, absorbed in a ceaseless round of mediocre, sordid trifles, but clothed in the dignity and grace of immortal spirits, caught and held for a little with things, thrown down by obstacles, drawn aside by

allurements, some of them bound hand and foot by evil, but, on the whole, moving with an almost inevitable attraction to a great and high and beautiful destiny.[14]

I have asked myself if these can be mere dreams, fancies, auto-suggestions, exhalations of physical happiness and fortunate environment. But they fail to conform to these explanations. Closely connected though they are with physical conditions and surroundings, they steal in sometimes with redoubled splendor after long absence, in darkened days and periods of physical untowardness. In the dreariness following failure and disappointment and loss, swiftly, subtly—perhaps in the night—a surge of courage and hope flows in upon one; as if the elixir of an immortal strength were being poured into the soul. I have tried to put myself, in imagination, in outward conditions entirely alien and inhospitable to these experiences—life in a factory, for instance, and a tenement house, where I would be sunshine-starved, beauty-bereft, cut off from books, art, society, everything. Would these deprivations, even if I had been brought up under them, have shut me away from all mystical experience? Would not Beauty have some way

[14] It is hardly necessary to add that I am attempting to give here only a fragment of personal experience and that I am not touching the more definitely Christian side of it.

taught me its mystic secret? Would not the vision of the Perfect have arisen through all the dust and dreariness? Would not the Presence that besets us behind and before have found me? I cannot tell, but it seems to me so. Is it only one's "disposition" that opens to him these influences? Have not millions of one's fellows, with dispositions unlike his own, similar experiences? And might not others, who are without them, have them?

Often these renewals of spirit come through nature, when it seems as if every grass-blade and shrub and leaf were sensitized with spiritual healing and vitality. Sometimes a human hand serves to convey the chrism; sometimes it comes in solitude, with no apparent medium. All this is common enough. Ten thousand poets have felt and expressed it, or tried; millions have felt something of it and have never tried to express it. The very commonness of the experience makes it not less mystical, or real, or precious, but more so.

While not always directly religious, these experiences have always been, to me, at least, associated with a pervading sense of Supreme Love because of which and by means of which they came. Whether they would disappear and fade into the light of common day, if I should come to believe them merely subjective, I do

not know; certainly, they would lose the heart of their meaning. I am not saying that these individual experiences are the basis and foundation of my faith. That roots in the soil of a common Christian faith; but this is one of the forms in which it becomes living and expressive. One must have his own "drop o' dew," even though the largess covers the whole great meadow. So far from beclouding the intellect, or unfitting one for careful thinking and earnest work, these experiences clarify the mind and enhearten one for toil. Without the freshness and zest which they give to life, existence might grow ashen and dreary—a meaningless leer or a "tragic shadow-play."

It should be added that while these experiences in their indescribable individuality of meaning and significance often come unexpectedly, like perfume wafted, though not by chance, from an invisible garden, still the mystical mood, the sense of the Presence, the calm of spirit which puts one in touch with the larger life, can be induced by prayer, though not always at the moment. Prayer comes to mean, more and more, this mystical opening of the heart to the Divine, including an outreach to the sacred souls in the circle of one's affection, as all embraced within the Eternal Love.

VI

But is not this intrusting too much to what appears to be a mere feeling? Do not such experiences vary greatly in intensity and reach their maximum of convincing power only at certain rare and fleeting moments? Yes, the mystical experience is intermittent and inconstant.[15] But must it not be so, under the conditions of our dual nature and environment? We are physical as well as spiritual beings. Our feet are in the dust, even while our heads are among the stars. We are of the earth earthy, as well as of the heavens heavenly. Therefore the vision fades. But the memory of it, the sense of its reality, does not fade. "Sometimes," as H. W. Dresser writes, "a person's whole life will be changed by the coming of a quickening presence or through the persuasions of an inner vision."[16] To the same effect are those arresting words of Professor Dühm: "He who has once been seized by the conviction, 'I stand before the Living God,' has experienced in himself the secret of religion, and his whole life is henceforth consecrated (*geweiht*)."[17]

William James says of mystical experiences,

[15] Hocking, in his The Meaning of God in Human Experience, discusses this necessity with penetration and conclusiveness.

[16] The Future Life, p. 29.

[17] Das Geheimniss in der Religion, p. 32.

"as a rule, they carry with them a curious sense of authority for after-time."[18] As one strives to translate the vision into terms of life and conduct, the conviction of its soundness deepens rather than vanishes. One knows it to be real in the sober and dogged struggle to be true to it, as well as in the high and flaming moments of visitation. He is well aware that he is not deceived, but that in these swift incursions of the invisible he has "come on that which is." For these "vanishings," be they what they may,

> Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
> Are yet a master light of all our seeing.

[18] Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 381.

Part II

TESTS OF MYSTICISM

"Prove all things"

CHAPTER IV

DEFECTS AND LIMITATIONS OF MYSTICISM[1]

"A DRAGON waits on everything that is very good," wrote Hawthorne. Many dragons wait on mysticism, and not always in vain. Nor are the dangers to which mysticism is exposed merely external. They spring from inherent defects and limitations. For, with all its sincerity and purity of spirit, it cannot be claimed that mysticism is flawless. In fact, it has exhibited, in both its historic and contemporary forms, several grave errors which cannot be overlooked; and it is only as these are freely recognized that its best values can be realized.

I

In the first place, mysticism is chargeable with the errors and faults of individualism.[2] By *individualism* I mean emphasis upon *the*

[1] The discussion is mainly confined to Christian mysticism.

[2] The individualism of mysticism is never a selfish grasping of material advantages. It is of quite another sort—the magnifying of one's own experience as superior to, or at least apart from, that of others.

self as isolated from others, as contrasted with *personalism*, which emphasizes *the self as related to others*.[3] Every great spiritual movement, it is true, has exalted the individual. It is a large part of the power of mysticism that it has done the same; only in doing so it has too far forgotten the inherently social nature of selfhood, of truth, of virtue, of spiritual life.

None has seen the danger of relying upon the vagaries of purely individual revelations of truth more clearly than have some of the mystics themselves. Thus Juan of the Cross, though so great an extremist in many ways, writes:

> I am terrified by what passes among us these days. Anyone who has barely begun to meditate, if he becomes conscious of these words during his self-recollection, pronounces them forthwith to be the work of God and considering them to be so, says, "God has spoken to me," or, "I have had an answer from God." But it is not true; such a one has only been speaking to himself. Besides, the affection and desire for these words which men encourage, cause them to reply to themselves, and then to imagine that God has spoken.[4]

The deep-visioned and incisive Coleridge,

[3] For a discussion of the relation of the individual to the person, see my Personality and the Christian Ideal, chapter iii.

[4] See The Expository Times, September, 1912, p. 531.

"the rapt one with the godlike forehead," who may with good reason be included among the mystics, has this to say of this type of mysticism:

> *Antinuous:* What do you call mysticism? And do you use the word in a good or bad sense?
>
> *Nous:* In the latter only, as far as we are now concerned with it. When a man refers to inward feelings and experiences of which mankind at large are not conscious, as evidences of the truth of any opinion, such a man I call a mystic; and the grounding of any theory or belief on accidents or anomalies of individual sensations or fancies, and the use of peculiar terms invented or perverted from their ordinary significations, for the purpose of expressing these idiosyncrasies, and pretended facts of interior consciousness, I name mysticism.[5]

It is quite evident that what both the Spanish mystic and the English thinker are condemning is not the intuitive method itself but the abuse of it. There is certainly a most serious danger into which mystics have often fallen, even some of the greatest of them, of confusing the Inner Light with their own vagrant imaginations and superficial judgments. They have failed to recognize the value of the common testimony,

[5] Aids to Reflection, p. 337, Burlington Edition.

"Christian consciousness," as a source of appeal and evaluation. They have failed still more to realize that it is only through the medium of a society of spiritual persons that these disclosures of truth have been made possible to the individual. As Bishop Brent has well said: "Mystic observation and experience must have the support and purification of universal mystic experience that will distinguish between the false and the true, phantasm and reality, and deliver the individual from eccentricity and extravagance."[6]

Yet when the social nature of truth and the danger of trusting too implicitly to individual impressions have been conceded to the full, the basis of certainty remains, after all, in the conviction of a direct disclosure to one's own soul to be tested, sifted, interpreted with the utmost care by comparison with the common experience, yet, in the end, indubitable because one's own. "I count as nothing," cries the broken and defeated Savonarola, "darkness encompasses me; *yet the light I saw was the light from heaven.*"

The individualism of mysticism has frequently led to its underestimation of, sometimes its contempt for, institutions. As contrasted with the egregious institutionalism all

[6] The Sixth Sense, p. 103.

about them, this has been an advanced and releasing attitude of the mystics. Institutions are for men and not men for institutions; yet institutions are essential to the well-being of humanity in a sense that the mystics did not always realize. Dante saw this, as his pageant of the church testifies. Luther saw it, as some of his less balanced contemporaries did not, and erring upon the opposite side, let fling his denunciations of Carlstadt and the Zwickau prophets, without stint.

When one considers the enslaving tyranny which institutions have exercised over the human spirit, it is difficult to exaggerate the debt which is owing to the mystics for upholding the freedom of faith and of individual access to God. It is they who have kept alive the inner spirit of religion through all the institution-darkened centuries. And yet without the Christian institutions there might have been no faith preserved for the mystics to purify.

Professor Royce, in discussing the tendency of mysticism to ignore the church, points out the freedom from it so noticeable in Paul. "Paul was a mystic," he writes, "but he was a mystic with a community to furnish the garden where the mystical flowers grew, and where the fruits of the Spirit were ripened, and

where all the gifts of the Spirit found their only worthy expression."[7]

It would not be true to say that mysticism separates one from his fellows. On the contrary, the mystical experience draws those who possess it together. It acts as a magnet to create social fellowships, as all the mystical brotherhoods attest—Essenes, Franciscans, Waldenses, Beghards, Brethren of the Common Life, Quakers, Moravians, Wesleyans, and the rest. Yet it does tend, in some degree, to draw men away from the natural social unities—the home, the state, the church as an outward institution—unless accompanied, as it usually is, by strong social and ethical motives.

A similar underestimate, not to say disesteem, of the *Bible* may doubtless be justly charged to some of the mystics. Yet, on the whole, mystics deeply love their Bibles. The spiritual interpretation of the Bible characteristic of mysticism, in spite of the frequent extravagance of its allegorism,[8] is in happy contrast with the deadening effect of literalism and has contributed richly to its highest understanding and use.[9]

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[7] The Problem of Christianity, vol. i, p. 400.

[8] For a brilliant discussion of the allegorical method of interpretation as used by the mystics, see The Garden of Nuts, by Robertson Nicoll, chapter iv.

[9] See Von Dobschütz: The Influence of the Bible upon Civilization, p. 113.

II

A further defect of mysticism lies in its tendency to extravagance, to excess, sometimes even to fanaticism. It often carries its truths, its practices, its pursuits, to the very verge of unreason, sometimes beyond. The mediæval mystics not seldom fail to keep "within hailing distance of common sense." Thus Eckhart, filled with a great truth, but carrying it to an extreme, asserts:

> The heavenly Father begetteth his Only-Begotten Son in himself and in me. Wherefore in himself and in me? I am one with him, and he has no power to shut me out. In the self-same work, the Holy Ghost receives its being and proceeds from me, as from God. Wherefore? I am in God, and if the Holy Ghost takes not its being from me, neither does it take it from God. In no wise am I shut out.[10]

Such statements have a deeper meaning than appears on the surface; nevertheless, they pass the bounds both of sanity and reverence and contrast strongly with the sobriety in intensity of the New Testament. Mystics often give too much play to what Luther called *Schwärmerei*.

So too with extravagance in self-discipline. In their supreme devotion to the life of the

[10] See Steiner: Mystics of the Renaissance, p. 57.

spirit the mystics of the past failed, as a rule, to rightly honor the body as an instrument and medium of the spirit. They did not see, as do we of to-day the intimacy of the relationship between soul and body. Only a modern mystic could write:

> Let us not always say,
> "Spite of this flesh to-day,
> I strove, made head, gained ground
> on the whole."
> As the bird wings and sings,
> Let us cry: "All good things
> Are ours, nor soul helps flesh,
> More now than flesh helps soul."

We cannot help regretting—even while we revere them—that such extremists as Saint Teresa and Henry Suso so despised and mutilated the body in the self-tortures which they inflicted upon themselves. Saint John of the Cross, valiant bearer and lover of crosses, fails to enlist our sympathy in his prayer that no day of his life might pass in which he should not suffer something. Even À Kempis in certain passages of the Imitation falls into an abnormal asceticism and self-abnegation which contrasts unfavorably with the stronger and sweeter portions of his priceless classic. Doubtless it is unbecoming to criticize a piety so far beyond our own; but the real strength of these

noble souls does not consist in their self-afflictions, trances, spiritual excesses, but in the saner spirit of devotion and love which was their customary frame of mind.

The note of excess is found, too, even in that which is the chief glory of mysticism—as of religion itself—love. Not that it is possible to love too much; but the form and expression of love may be too lavish, too intimate, too familiar. And this has undoubtedly too often been the case in the history of mysticism.[11] The mystic seems often to regard God as his own exclusive and peculiar possession. It is this doubtless which led Professor Francis G. Peabody to say, "The defect of mysticism is not its emotional exaltation but its emotional isolation."[12] Pure as the mediæval mystics were in heart and motive, and above reproach in the intensity of their religious affection, some of their writings are very much weakened by religious eroticism. Even the Moravians, whose piety, as a rule, was so sane and simple, were at one period at least affected by mawkishness and sentimentalism. It has been claimed that mysticism is only a sublimated form of the sexual instinct.[13] In certain of its aspects the

[11] See chap. xix of Taylor's, The Mediæval Mind.

[12] Jesus Christ and the Christian Character, p. 279.

[13] For a refutation of this theory see Hocking: The Meaning of God in Human Experience, Appendix.

relationship cannot be ignored. Nor need it be. Yet the two are leagues apart. As a substitute for sexual affection and a cure for sexualism, mysticism has produced remarkable results. Indeed, human experience has proven that no power is so great to restrain sexual appetite as that of religion. Witness, for example, Augustine's Confessions.

The line of demarcation between full and free expression and over-expression, between the adequate and the excessive, is so intangible that it is not to be wondered at that the mystics sometimes crossed it, viewed by a cooler and more critical judgment. Yet, after all, as one surveys the main body of mystical literature, the notable fact is the surprising manner in which they succeeded in voicing the inner life of the soul without passing the bounds of sincerity and good taste.

Contemplation is a mystical exercise which has often been carried to an extreme that involves selfishness. To know when and how to turn from vision to action, from the contemplation of the Ideal to the needs of a world of men, requires a wisdom and a self-discipline which the mystic has not always shown.

III

The most serious theoretical error of mys-

ticism is its inclination to minimize evil in order to magnify God.

"Evil," says Dionysius, "is neither in demons nor in us, as an existent [positive] evil, but [only] as a failure and dearth of the perfection of our own proper goods."[14] Eckhart, following Aquinas, states that "evil is nothing but privation or falling away from being; not an effect but a defect."[15] This tendency has too often attached itself to the mystical theology, although there is no essential connection.

The strong impulse on the part of Christian mysticism to refuse to concede to evil any fundamental place or part in the *original constitution of either nature or man* is true to the deepest conviction of religion, as well as to philosophy and science. Ontological dualism is as unchristian as it is unphilosophical.[16] Mysticism has done a great service in denying to evil any such eternal reality as belongs to goodness. But mysticism has often failed to take due account of the overwhelming reality of evil as *an actual force* in the existent order.

It is true—as mysticism has deeply seen and reverently made known—that evil has been the instrument of testing, the thing to be overcome,

[14] Quoted by Von Hügel: The Mystical Element in Religion, vol. ii, p. 294.

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] A further discussion of this subject will be found in an article of mine entitled "Dualism or Duality," Harvard Theological Review, April, 1913.

and thus the means of good, to many a soul. Yet this fact is offset by one equally undeniable —that to many more it has meant only defeat and thralldom. Because an experience has been turned into a means of good does not involve that it is itself good. Mystics do not always see clearly that evil can be explained only in the light of freedom. Upon these two fundamental facts, freedom and sin, pure Christianity has ever laid stress.

Mysticism, with its failure to see evil in its full heinousness, often fails to estimate human freedom at its full value. It is overshadowed by the all-inclusive Divine Activity. God is all and does all; man has but to be still and to receive. Yet this is true, as a rule, only of the monistic mystics. Many place great emphasis upon freedom, conceiving it in the largest way. Thus Angelus Silesius, in the Cherubinic Wanderer, declares:

> Naught stronger is than God,
> Yet can he not forfend,
> That I whate'er I will
> Should not will or intend.[17]

Here, then we find the root of the absence of the militant spirit in mysticism, which Baron Von Hügel has pointed out: "This antipathy

[17] Translation by Paul Carus. See The Monist, vol. xviii, 1, p. 108.

to even a relative, God-willed independence and power of self-excitation, gives mysticism, as such, its constant bent toward Quietism."[18] Not that there have not been militant mystics, nor that there is any inherent irreconcilability between true mysticism and true Christian freedom. Yet its overbalanced emphasis upon the divine, as over against the human, has too far robbed mysticism of the sense of initiative, and so of power.

If the speculative mystics had been far-sighted, they might have foreseen that their mitigation of the raucousness of evil in the interest of the all-pervasive goodness of God would be sure to issue in *antinomianism*, with all its attendant ills. Perhaps even if they had foreseen it, they might not have withheld what seemed to them truth for the sake of consequences that might be unjustly drawn from it. And yet, false and disastrous issues suggest failure in the clear apprehension of the truth. At any rate, it is impossible to blind our eyes to the fact that moral laxity has, to a limited extent, accompanied the mystical attitude toward life. The great mystics themselves were free from it. In hardly a single instance is there any lapse on the part of any of the heroes of mysticism from the highest and most

[18] The Mystical Element of Religion, vol. ii, p. 286.

strict moral standards. They have trodden upon the serpent and the adder, the young lion and the dragon have they trampled under foot. Yet their weaker followers and successors have not always borne themselves so firmly, especially in group mysticism. In his chapter, "Brotherhood Groups," R. M. Jones writes as follows:

> The somewhat abstract doctrines of Dionysius, Erigena, and Amaury had now filtered down into the common mind, and were being changed from academic truths to practical truths. They began to be translated from their safe place in books to the dangerous stuff of human life. So long as the teaching of the Allness of God and the possibility of every person being an expression of his nature was wrapped away in the difficult verbiage of a philosophical treatise, matters went on as though the book had never been written, but the situation was mightily altered when those views spread through the world and became a *popular doctrine* as they now did.[19]

It is not necessary to trace the extent of this moral indifference, leading to gross license and immorality. It is sufficient to take note of it as an occasional by-product of mysticism,

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[19] Studies in Mystical Religion, p. 202.

growing out of the indefinite pantheistic theory of evil so often attached to mystical speculation.

IV

To these more positive defects of mysticism must be added certain marked limitations.

First of these is its *limited vision of the breadth and scope of the life of humanity, and so of the kingdom of God.* In no sense could the mystics be called narrow. They have been among the peerless thinkers and doers of the race, men and women with eye single and clear who did *this one thing* and thus did it in a manner approaching perfection. They were of *the* world—that is, the world that is most real and worthful—but not of *this* world. In spite of the mystics' neglect of science, many of them have done noble and lasting service in making the present world a better world to live in. They have not, as a rule, despised or neglected the duties and obligations of the outer life. "The best preparation of a religious man"—such is the "golden sentence" of Bonaventura—"is to do common things in a perfect manner." They have often been strikingly successful executives and adminstrators. Paul possessed great executive power. The mystics of the orders were great organizers and leaders. Catherine of Genoa's accounts as matron of the hospital

"were never found wrong by a single farthing."[20] "The soul enamored of my truth," said the voice of God to Catherine of Siena, "never ceases to serve the whole world in general."[21] With all the dark sayings of his sermons, Eckhart preached clearly the value of service. "What a man takes in by contemplation he must pour out in love," he declared. "It is better to feed the hungry than to see even such visions as Paul saw."[22] Tauler went so far as to say, "One can spin, and another can make shoes, and all these are gifts of the Holy Ghost, I tell you." Brother Lawrence made cooking sacramental. George Herbert wrote:

> Who sweeps a room as to thy laws
> Makes that and the action fine.

Furthermore, mystics have been among the great political and social idealists and constructionists. The prophets were both mystics and social reformers. King Alfred, Saint Francis, Savonarola, Luther, William Penn—mystical all—were builders of the new social order. Thomas More's *Utopia* is full of mystical spirit. With the vision of God often came the vision of a redeemed social order which should embody

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[20] Von Hügel: *Op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 143.
[21] Underhill: Mysticism, p. 210.
[22] R. M. Jones: *Op. cit.*, p. 238.

his will; and the dreamers were not content with the dream; they sought to make it real.

Nevertheless, when all has been said, it still remains true that the mystic's conception of the kingdom of God has been somewhat one-sided and incomplete. In dwelling upon its eternal nature he has too far overlooked its temporal nature. The mystic of the past did not see what a scholar-mystic of our own time stated thus:

> All is for Him who gave Himself for all— nature, science, art, business and pleasure, play and work, the body and the spirit, society and the state, as well as the church.[23]

Tauler, in his sermon on the Kingdom, said of it, "For the kingdom of God, what is it but God himself with all his riches?" That is most noble and true, and yet it is not the whole truth. Unless the City of God comes down out of heaven and transforms life here, it will not fulfill human hopes and needs. As a Chicago preacher said, "Heaven may be our home, but Chicago is our present place of residence."

In political and social affairs the mystic of the past has been, as a rule, too content to leave things as they are. It is to rationalism,

[23] Egbert C. Smyth: The True Use of the World, Andover Review, vol. xx, p. 525.

quite as much as to mysticism, that we owe the rise of democracy. The assertion of human rights, the claim of the individual to his share of material wealth and privilege, the uprisings which brought about the American and French revolutions—with these mysticism had comparatively little to do.

It is not without significance that the rise of democracy accompanied the domination of deism, sometimes even of atheism. Men felt, whether rightly or wrongly, that in order to reach a true sense of their own powers and prerogatives they must put God far enough away to give them a sufficient sense of themselves. The same tendency marks the progress of industrial democracy. Here is something which neither the institutionalism nor the mysticism of the past could quite grasp, for both have lacked vision of the breadth and scope of human society. There was needed a larger conception of the worth of the physical, of the present world, of man, of society as an organic developing order.

And yet, as the new political order has established itself, as the wealth and splendor of life in the world of here and now have unfolded, and as men, under its spell and power, have grown farther and farther from mysticism and come under the sway of a glit-

tering materialism, they have come to realize that without spiritual life—that kinship with the eternal which mysticism alone can give—the whole splendid achievement we call civilization is an empty show. A deep, indefinable *Heimweh* has made itself felt. Many to-day are earnestly asking whether, without abandoning democracy and the sense of the worth and possibilities of the present life, it is not possible to have also that which alone can give meaning and value to it all—the sense of eternal and invisible realities which mysticism alone fully possesses.

V

Another serious limitation of mysticism in its interpretation of Christianity is *its lack of the sense of history, especially of the historic Christ.*[24]

This weakness lies, manifestly, alongside its greatest strength. Without the mystical interpretation of Christ as the eternal, indwelling Word of God in the soul, Christianity could hardly have survived, much less have conquered. In interpreting him spiritually and inwardly mysticism *universalized* Christ. A historical character cannot become potent

[24] Professor Hermann goes so far as to characterize mysticism as a "piety which feels that which is historical in the positive religion to be burdensome and so rejects it." Inge: Christian Mysticism, p. 346.

except as he is identified with an inherent spiritual experience. This identification mysticism effected. It saw in Jesus *the Christ.*

And yet, in doing this, mysticism almost lost the historic Jesus.[25] The intellectual and scholarly instinct came in to supplement both the mystical and the institutional interests. Since mysticism was concerned with Jesus only spiritually, and the church was concerned with him, in the main, neither historically nor mystically, but practically and sacramentally, it is clear that, except for the instinct and service of pure scholarship, we should have had no clear and reliable understanding of the Jesus of history.

Not that there is any fundamental disharmony between mysticism and *learning.* On the contrary, mysticism has been most closely allied with the development of theology and philosophy. It has, as we have seen, a strong speculative and literary bent. But in the study of history, as of science as a matter of patient investigation, mysticism as such has had little interest.

As a result mysticism has missed, to a large degree, the historic factor in Christianity. It has not sufficiently grasped the ideal which

[25] "Die Mystik wird überall in eben dem Masse ungesund, in dem sie alles Geschichtliche abzustreifen und hinter sich zu lassen sucht." Wobbermin: Geschichte und Historie in die Religions Wissenschaft, p. 3.

is coming more and more to command the thought of our time—that is, *Christianity as the historic consummation of a revelation that pervades the entire religious life of humanity.* The study both of history and of comparative religion is necessary to enable us to see in Jesus Christ the highest possible revelation of God, significant for the whole human race as its only adequate Ideal.

A Christo-centric theology, in the true sense, is possible only as the mystical theology and the historical unite in giving us a Christ in whom are blended the Lord of Faith and Jesus of Nazareth.

CHAPTER V

MYSTICISM AND RATIONALITY

THE strength of mysticism as a philosophy of life lies chiefly in two facts. The first is that it persistently contends that ultimate truth is a matter of immediate personal experience, and the second is that it persistently endeavors to express and interpret the experience in rational and moral terms. Hence its close association, on the one hand with simple, unreflective faith, and, on the other, with philosophy, theology, and literature. Though pronouncing his experience ineffable, the mystic has proven abundantly able both to state and to defend it.

I

The interplay of these two impulses, the one toward immediate and intuitive truth, the other toward interpretative and analytical truth, appears throughout the history of human thought in movements, in schools, and in individual thinkers. Harmonious in Plato, intuition and ratiocination became divergent in his

successors. Reunited in Christianity, they again diverge, again seek each other in early scholasticism, again part, and in the period of dominant rationalism almost lose touch with one another; but again draw toward one another in the philosophy of the nineteenth century, and thus, through action and reaction, strife and adjustment, temper and supplement one another. In individual thinkers the same claimancy of the two principles—the rationalizing and the mystical—is often witnessed, the one that is slighted ultimately demanding its rights. Thus Hegel and Schleiermacher, beginning with the mystical tendency, move in the direction of rationalism, the one to the almost complete absorption of the mystical in the rational, the other toward a truer harmony; while Schelling and Fichte, starting with the predominance of the intellectual element, gravitate toward the mystical.[1]

This twofold character of mysticism as experience and as interpretation has exposed it to a twofold attack, the first from without, against reliance upon experience (immediacy) as the criterion of truth, and the second from

[1] Professor George P. Adams writes of Hegel: "Perhaps the most interesting and significant problem in the interpretation of Hegelian philosophy, and, indeed, of all absolute idealism, is precisely this relation between the two motives in tuition and discursive thought, experience and its intellectual elaboration, mysticism and rationalism" (The Mystical Element in Hegel's Early Theological Writings. University of California Publications).

within, against the attempt to justify and interpret experience by and for the intellect. Let us take up, first, the common objections to the mystical reliance upon intuition.

II

Two singularly contradictory arguments have been made against intuition, first to prove it to be mere untrustworthy subjectivism, and, second, to show that it is only a swift process of sound ratiocination, unconscious of its movement and aware only of its result. If either of these can be proven, it renders the other void.

In answer to the first of these objections the mystic virtually replies: "I know the truth of the spiritual world with a conclusive sense of conviction, as I know myself. This is not mere emotion, it takes hold of my whole being and convinces me of its reality. 'The heart has reasons which the mind knows not of.' Moreover, the conviction is not mine alone; my fellow believer has the same sense of certainty and assures me of it." And in answer to the second objection he replies: "A process of reasoning of which I am unconscious is a pure assumption. Unconscious, or semiconscious, reasoning is not reasoning at all. It is of the very nature of reasoning that it be

conscious.[2] Moreover, the assurance I feel in the presence of spiritual truth is far stronger than that which I reach as the result of a process of inferential reasoning. It is of a superior order and quality; I cannot go back of the testimony of consciousness, which is that this truth is directly and not inferentially known." In some such way as this mysticism may furnish a reason for its faith. As Dr. George A. Gordon has stated it: "The ultimate premise of thought is not proof. It is insight or assumption in accordance with sane reason."[3] "But," continues the objector, "what about *ideas?* Can you, as a mystic, pretend to converse with truth apart from ideas? And what are ideas but intellectual concepts?"

III

Ideas are the clothing, the embodiment, of reality. It is indeed impossible to approach reality without ideas or to interpret it afterward except in terms of ideas.[4] Nevertheless, the ideas are not the reality itself, nor are they adequate to express it. Always reality is

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[2] That which has seemed to be unconscious reasoning may, as in the cases of the Elberfeldt horses, as Maeterlinck, holds, be telepathic.

[3] The New Epoch for Faith. p. 1.

[4] The term "ideas" is used as including both concepts and images, but with the emphasis upon the conceptual element.

greater, richer, higher than they.[5] If one were to liken reality to a home, ideas constitute the house. Through them entrance is afforded to the inner truth; they inclose and enshrine it. They even constitute the furniture and the pictures on the walls; but they are not the home itself. That is something invisible, intangible, indefinable, but intensely real. Without it the house has no real meaning, at least no complete meaning. Without a reality transcending them, ideas are as empty and meaningless as an empty house. "We wrongly believe," as Maeterlinck has said, "that because the harvest of life passes along the road of intelligence it has been gathered upon this road."

It is unquestionably true that the mystic has overlooked his indebtedness to ideas in his insistence that he comes directly to the naked unmediated reality. There is ample ground for the criticism offered by Professor Coe:

> What discredits the mystical theory is that it accepts as immediate intuition what is palpably an interpretation. His spiritual monism may be true or not; that question does not here concern us; the present contention is simply that the mystic acquires his religious convic-

[5] "Immediacy and mediateness, in short, are necessary complements in all conscious life" (H. A. Overstreet, "The Ground of the Time-Illusion," Philosophical Review, vol. xviii, 1, p. 23).

tions precisely as his nonmystical neighbor does, namely, through tradition and instruction, auto-suggestion grown habitual, and reflective analysis. The mystic brings his theological beliefs to the mystical experience; he does not derive them from it.[6]

And yet the mystic's religious experience does differ, immeasurably, from that of his nonmystical neighbor, because he has passed into the substance of his ideas—so at least he believes—to that secret Divine Reality hidden within them which they may either reveal or conceal. In this sense his experience is immediate, intuitive, indefinable. He goes straight to it, even if it be by the pathway of ideas. Moreover, it is only half of the truth to say that his theological beliefs determine the mystic's experience; he comes away from his experience with ideas modified, enlarged, infilled with vital meaning.

IV

What, then, is involved in the doctrine of immediacy, of which mysticism makes so much? We have already found that it does not exclude the mediation of ideas, although it transcends them. We are now prepared to say that true

[6] "Sources of Mystical Revelation," Hibbert Journal, vi, 2, p. 367.

immediacy, or intuition, not only does not abrogate reason but *is itself reason.* The reason which the mystic recognizes is, however, the Higher Reason, the Inner Light, the Logos, the Eye of the Soul; that is, it is a reason which, whatever aid it may receive from ideas in approaching its object, in the end beholds it directly and immediately.[7] It has parted the veil and entered into the presence of its Object. Unlike the swallow on the lake, in Tennyson's figure, "that sees and stirs the surface shadow there," it has "dipt into the abysm."[8]

It hardly needs to be pointed out that this recognition of a Higher Reason runs through the whole course of human thought. The history of philosophy is replete with it, from Plato's distinction between *Intuition* and *Dialectic* to Coleridge's between *Reason* and the *Understanding* and the later ones between the *Intellect* and the *Reason* and between the *Discursive* and the *Intuitive Reason.* Whatever may be their differences in describing the Higher Reason and its operation, the mystics are one in ascribing to it a divine and transcendent character and in denying to the intellect or reasoning faculty,

[7] Here mysticism parts company with philosophic monism. Royce, for example, describes the function of reason as "the synthetic view of many facts in their unity—in the grasping of a complex of relations in their total significance" (Sources of Religious Insight, p. 90).

[8] The Ancient Seer.

which proceeds by syllogism and inference, the power to reach Ultimate Reality. That must be seen with open face, as one looks into the eyes of a friend. Thus reason, in the highest sense, according to the mystics, is experiential rather than analytic or synthetic, in its operation. It is concerned with the supreme realities, the truths of the spirit, and concentrates upon them as embracing the ultimate values of existence.

Not that mysticism has need to deny the place and validity of the intellect. Within its sphere the intellect has both validity and value, but its truths are not those of the higher life of the soul. It has no vision of its own, no first-hand contact with spiritual realities. The syllogism may be of service in determining that all men are *mortal*, but not that they are *immortal*. If it is given sole sway in the alien realm of spirit, all the intellect can do is to substitute the ideas in which ultimate truths are enwrapped for the truths themselves and then proceed to relate and organize these ideas or doctrines in such a way as to produce a *system*, in which ideas emerge from other ideas logically and schematically, and all is lifeless and mechanical. This is rationalism—a system in which ideas generate ideas and there is no direct contact with their original sources.

The truths of the spirit cannot be reached in that way. Take such fundamental yet final truths as Right, Love, God. How can they be discovered save by spiritual experience? Out of what could these realities be constructed, or deduced, if they were not already existent, as real and incontrovertible as are we ourselves? They are realities of a personal nature, real because personality is real, boundless as are personal possibilities, deep as are the depths of personal being. Unless we *experience* these truths, how can we know them? If we simply open the eyes of our selfhood, are they not there to greet us? We may apply to them the words of Pascal concerning God and say: "We could not find them unless we already had them." Are any truths equally *rational* with these truths of personality? Can mysticism, which dwells in this light, be other than rational? It is when we are truest to ourselves that we realize these truths most intensely,

> In clearest vision, amplitude of mind,
> And Reason in her most exalted mood.

This is not saying that we divest ourselves of either our sensuous or our intellectual powers and processes to reach this higher realm of truth. That would be impossible. What we do is to enter a new truth dimension, so to

speak, with our total powers and faculties in action, yet exercised in connection with a higher perceptive power which is personal and spiritual.

V

But what of dialectic? Have we not in its patient, hard-won ascent the genuine method and the final assurance of truth, rather than in the crass assumption of an inner experience, a direct vision? Certainly, there is something in the process of dialectic, as contrasted with that of formal logic, that gives it a very close affinity with mysticism. No less a thinker than Plato himself recognized the tie, for in Plato dialectic is not a substitute for but an aid to intuition.

> Is it not, then, the dialectic method only, said I, that proceeds thus onward—removing all hypotheses back to the starting point, that it may become firmly established, and so gradually lead and draw upward the eye of the soul, which was truly buried in a certain barbaric mire?[9]

To clarify the eye of the soul, to draw it upward that it may see for itself, is the true function of dialectic. It is a process of clearing away obstructions, or of climbing to a point

[9] The Republic, book vii, chap. xiii, Henry Davis's translation.

where the vision of truth is unobstructed, as it is pictured in Walter Pater's description of the Platonic dialectic:

> It is only upon the final step, with free view at last on every side, uniting together and justifying all those various, successive, partial apprehensions of the difficult way—only on the summit comes the intuitive comprehension of what the true form of the mountain really is; with a mental, or, rather, an imaginative hold upon which, for the future, we can find our way securely about it; observing perhaps, that next to that final intuition, the first view, the first impression, had been truest about it.[10]

Bergson, in the clarifying description of the nature of intuition in his Introduction to Metaphysics, fails to recognize the function of dialectic. He makes room only for analysis, succeeding intuition. The fault of philosophy has been, as he points out, that it has surveyed truth from without, conceptually, instead of getting within it. And yet, such an outside survey may be made a preparation and aid to a sally within instead of a substitute for it.

Dialectic, that is, is ancillary to intuition, an aid to the recognition of truth, not a construc-

[10] Plato and Platonism, p. 180, Library Edition.

tive process. As such it is not absolutely necessary to every individual experience of truth, either as a conscious or an unconscious prerequisite, though it holds an essential place in the total process of spiritual experience.

VI

Mysticism is not content, as we have seen, with an appeal to experience. It has always stood, also, for interpretation. It has not been satisfied with the gift of tongues, but would have also interpretation of tongues. Thus it has to meet, as we noted at the beginning of the chapter, not only the attack of those without who question its right to appeal to experience as a medium of truth, but of those within who protest against any attempt at explication and would have only babblings and enthusiasms, or at best only such limited forms of intelligible expression as would serve to bind together its own initiates.

It cannot be denied that this nonrational type of mysticism has played a large part in its history. Christian mysticism itself has had its Montanists, its Enthusiasts, its Family of Love, its Ranters, its "Holy Ghost and Us" societies. But these erraticisms and extravagances only lend the greater significance to the fact that, on the whole, mysticism has

stood unfalteringly for a rational interpretation of religious experience. Conclusive of this is the fact that not infrequently mysticism is wrongly identified with its interpretation of experience, rather than with its insistence upon the experience itself.

Those who to-day are joining in the popular outcry against theology hardly realize that, if consistently applied, it would eradicate not only such treatises as the Summa of Aquinas and the Institutes of Calvin, but much of the Confessions of Augustine, the Theologica Germanica, the Imitatio Christi, and of all the noble literature in which the mystics have tried to interpret and relate their experience.

The most rational thing in mysticism, that which makes it supremely rational, is that it fastens with unrelaxing grasp upon the *central issue*, the truth that is at once highest, deepest, and most essential to true living. *It too often ignores everything else—science, art, literature, pleasure, culture, all—that it may reach the heart of truth and rest there.* It fails to realize that when one has found the Kingdom these things wait to be added unto it. Such a sense of values, or, rather, of *value*, is the rationality of the seeker of the pearl of great price, of the treasure hid in the field. It is the wisdom of knowing the best and gaining it at all costs, of

seizing the center of the field and holding it, of concentrating upon the truth that shapes and determines life because it is itself life.

This is an attitude toward truth which we have now too much lost. We lack the mystic's daring. We are appalled and shaken with the mystery of existence, with the limitations of knowledge. We are held back by the restraints of the scientific method, by the need of wide induction, and of painstaking care in reaching conclusions, not seeing that in the realm of the spirit the scientific method *is the seizure of moral and spiritual ultimates.* We are obsessed, now by the extent of our knowledge, now by the extent of our ignorance. With reference to ultimate truths we are hesitant and afraid. We survey them from the outside, but do not dare to enter and take possession.

Nothing could be more essentially irrational than this indecision, this waiting to be convinced, this hesitating inaction, for in respect to the central issues the main thing is *attitude*, and indecision is itself an attitude. Augustine, describing his years of vacillation concerning Christianity, wrote:

> For I would not allow my heart to climb, avoiding the precipice to die by the halter. For I wanted to be as certain of things unseen as I was that seven and three make ten. . . . I

might have been healed by belief, *directing my purified sight in some way toward Thy truth*, which ever abides and never fails in any part.[11]

A world of highly unprejudiced and open-minded people who were all holding the question of the existence of God or of the basis for ethics open, until the complete evidence, covering all possible contingencies, is in, would be as irrational as it would be irresolute. These are issues in which neutrality is as fallacious as it is immoral.

The mystic is unshakenly, convincedly, wholeheartedly *positive* in his spiritual attitude. It is not based upon the balance of probability, as is that of the rationalist. Nor is it merely the result of a will to believe—the apotheosis of a preference—like that of the pragmatist. It is perceptive belief, or, rather, it is not belief at all, he tells us, except in its weaker and untried forms, but the truest kind of knowledge —faith-knowledge.

[11] Book iv, chap. iv; Bigg's translation (italics mine).

CHAPTER VI

MYSTICISM AND PSYCHOLOGY

To-day no adequate study can be made of mysticism which does not pay large heed to psychology. And, indeed, it is but returning a compliment, for recent psychology has paid marked attention to mysticism.[1]

The mystic could not be blamed if he looked askance and with considerable suspicion upon the psychologist. The man who comes round to analyze and measure one's convictions and inspirations is not especially welcome. And yet he certainly can do no injury to an experience that is genuine and well grounded, and he may help to its better understanding and evaluation. At any rate, his inspection will be made, whether it is welcomed or not. If psychology attempts to go beyond its province in dealing with mysticism, becomes supercilious, or dogmatic, it is a duty to challenge its assertions; but any fear of psychology on the part

[1] Recent books upon Religious Psychology (for example, Stratton's The Psychology of the Religious Life and Leuba's Psychological Study of Religion) have turned aside from the psychological analysis of religious experience and are chiefly historical-psychological studies of religion.

of mysticism would be a weakness, for truth can never be an enemy to truth.

We have endeavored to carry on the entire discussion in the light of its psychological bearings, but it now seems best to give direct attention to some of the more specific questions involved. There are three problems which we will briefly consider: (1) Does psychology resolve mysticism into a mere congeries of mental states? (2) Does it show that mystical experience is located in the Subconsciousness? (3) What is the relation of Suggestion to mysticism?

I

May not these experiences, "deep seated in our mystic frame," after all—such is a query suggested by psychology—be but a method of behavior of our psychical organism, freaks of the frame itself, and nothing more? Psychology has made it clear that mystical states, such as conversion and ecstasy, are very closely connected with physical conditions. May not that be the sum and substance of them, and all this spiritual side, of which so much has been made, be merely a ghastly sport of nature, epiphenomenal froth, lying upon her vast unconsciousness like bubbles upon the bosom of a lake?

Such a possibility must be faced, and faced with the understanding that though raised by psychology it cannot be laid by psychology. Concerning mystical states and experiences psychology has much to say; upon the question of their objective character, their validity, it says, or should say, nothing. This is not within its province. The psychologist as a thinker, a super-psychologist, has a perfect right to express his judgment as to the objectivity of mystical experience, and he has often done this with great advantage to the problem involved; but when he does so he should make it quite clear that it is he who is speaking and not psychology.

It is reassuring to find that, in the main, the leading psychologists recognize this limitation of the province of psychology. When they have expressed themselves as to the objective nature of religious experience it has been, as a rule, without dogmatic denial of its validity. Thus we find Professor James saying:

> It must always remain an open question whether mystical states may not possibly be such superior points of view, windows through which the mind looks out upon a more extensive and inclusive world. The difference of the views seen from the different mystical windows need not prevent us from entertaining this sup-

> position. The wider world would in that case prove to have a mixed constitution like that of this world, that is all.[2]

Boutroux, while refusing to pass upon the question of the nature of mystical experience, attaches great importance to its convictions. Professors Ladd, G. Stanley Hall, Stratton, Starbuck, Pratt, Coe, and others, without, in most cases, attempting to pronounce upon the final nature of religious experience, place a high value upon it.[3]

On the other hand, it is quite plausible to resolve religious experience into mere psychic activity, as, for example, David Syme, in writing of Jacob Boehme:

> He imagines his soul to be in communion with God, whereas it is only in communion with itself, and the communications which he receives are only the result of the interaction of his central consciousness and the lower sphere.[4]

Perhaps the best reply to a representation like

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[2] Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 428.

[3] Münsterberg says of the truth of religion and philosophy: "Such over-experience can certainly never become a part of the experienceable world of physical existence. It remains, therefore, unreal, in the narrower sense of the word. But it is a content of our convictions, and as our conviction gives us the very firmest hold of our actions, the final realization, in the wider sense of the word, is here fulfilled in the highest degree" (The Eternal Values, p. 355).

[4] The Soul, p. 68.

that is to let the inner voice, of which Professor James speaks, whisper, "Bosh!" Not that there are not other things that might be said of it, as, that this is hardly the language in which the central consciousness may be supposed to converse with the lower; but if one chooses to restrict his view of reality to physical activities, it is useless to throw either stones or life-savers at him. Enough, that for the average intelligent person such interpretations of his deeper inner life produce their own refutation, "Like a man in wrath," the heart rises up to answer, "I have felt."[5] Not that communion with God does not involve "the interaction of the central consciousness and the lower sphere," but to confine it to that would be like confining conversation with your dearest friend to the alternate action of two juxtaposed larynxes.

II

A field of study undertaken by the new psychology, which seems to be especially fruitful for mysticism, is that of the subconsciousness. In view of all the diversifications of consciousness with which recent psychology has favored us, including subconsciousness, fringe-

[5] For a further discussion of this subject, the reader may consult my volume, Personality and the Christian Ideal, chaps. v–viii.

consciousness, and coconsciousness, it is not easy to get a clear idea of what is meant by the subconscious.

The present tendency among psychologists seems to be to attach the subconscious activity more closely than at first to the physical nature, at any rate to limit those wide-reaching powers (including religion itself) attributed to subconsciousness when it first lifted itself above the abyss into the field of the psychological consciousness.[6] (Just how the subconsciousness could ever have become a matter of consciousness is a problem which psychology has not yet solved, but we may pardon it, for its hands are full.)

A large part of our physical functioning goes on without reporting itself at all in consciousness, or so slightly that attention is not drawn to it. Of how many more of our total existence processes, including the moral and spiritual, this may be true, it is impossible to determine. It seems wholly reasonable, however, to affirm, with Professor Pratt, at least this:

> The fringe region is in no way "higher" or "purer" than the center of consciousness. It

[6] A very clear and careful resume of the history of the idea of subconsciousness and of the present attitude of psychologists toward it will be found in an article in the Harvard Theological Review, vol. vi, No. 2, entitled, "The Subconscious and Religion," by Professor James Bissett Pratt.

> contains evil as well as good, or, rather, it contains neither the one nor the other, but the materials for both. Only conscious personality is moral—nothing is good except a good will. The background is only a background; it is there not for its own sake but for the sake of the total personality. The best and purest aspect of the mind, the aspect of it most highly developed and most nobly human, is to be found not in the obscure shadows of the background, but in the clear sunlight of full consciousness.[7]

As I observe my own states while working in my study, for instance, I recognize in myself a certain stream of consciousness which moves along parallel with and below, so to speak, the main activity in which I am engaged. This subordinate consciousness is associated with the various organs of my body, concentrating more fully now on one, now on another. At one instant, for example, my eye catches the gilt of a book-title, at the next the glint of the sunshine on the floor. Next, perhaps, the chilliness of the room affects my skin, and, if sufficiently pronounced, makes me uneasy, so that I cannot carry on my main line of thought readily until it is corrected. Now the voice of a child, soothing in play or rasping in anger, reaches me, or the blurt of an automobile offends my ear. Or

[7] The Subconscious and Religion, p. 215.

perhaps the nerves of my stomach begin to remind me that the dinner hour is approaching, or should be. I have every reason to believe that sensations such as these are only the more clamant and imperious insurrections of a total physical activity that includes many separate activities—such as breathing and the action of the heart—not present to my normal consciousness at all.

This is what I should call *subconsciousness.* It is *sub* at least with respect to one's main consciousness, to the willed and purposive activity to which he bends his best powers; and part of it is so far *sub* that he is not aware of it at all, except through something abnormal in its working. Through disturbance, however, it may rise into his main consciousness.

Now, this physical consciousness, while it is mine and relates very closely to my well-being—is, in fact, essential to my very continuance as a physical being—nevertheless I feel to be, not *myself*, not of the substance and fiber of my truest self, but attached to me, like a servant, or monitor, constantly reporting to me certain things to which it asks me to give my attention. And I ought consequently to treat it precisely as I would a servant who is, on the whole, well-meaning and useful, and yet whom I need to subject to due and constant

watchfulness. Sometimes, for example, I should say to this lackey, "Yes, this is an important matter that you call to my attention, and I must attend to it, or my whole physical organism will suffer serious injury, and I myself be thus crippled in my activity." At another time when my man Friday calls to my notice some very pleasing sensation resulting from my environment, I may well respond, "Thanks; this is indeed worthy of my most lively attention; for it is capable of opening to me that world of pure Beauty and Truth to which I, as a True Self, belong." But again, and very often, I conceive that it is my duty to say to my subconsciousness, "This call of yours is an annoyance to me, a distraction; if I yield to it, and give it first place in my mind, I shall be untrue to myself and to the larger ends that I am seeking to serve. Keep still, subside, let me alone!"

So far, then, from being the seat and center of the religious faculty, the subconsciousness seems to be at the farthest remove from it. True, since the senses are the purveyors and allies of the mystical life, rightly used, this physical consciousness may contribute to and enhance religious experience; but, on the other hand, it is quite as often a hindrance and obstacle, so that one feels that he must endeavor to suppress it. For it is from the subconscious,

for instance, that those subtle sensual suggestions emanate, which, gaining control of the imagination, sometimes subvert the mystical mind. Pandulph's words in King John are applicable to this kind of subconscious activity:

> And better conquest never canst thou make
> Than arm thy constant and thy nobler parts
> Against these giddy loose suggestions.[8]

III

Over against this physical subconsciousness, occupying quite another stratum of the inner life, so to speak, is what has been called the superconsciousness,—a consciousness of personal realities and relationships which may be more or less dormant, but which at times press down into consciousness from above just as physical activities press in from below. This is the realm of personal relationships, including "God-consciousness."

The purpose of the esoteric mystic, in what he conceives to be his highest and most ineffable experience, is to have the God-consciousness completely rule and absorb every other form of consciousness. He smites the chord of self that it may pass in music out of sight and leave God alone. His whole desire is that God may

[8] King John, Act iii, Scene 1.

be all in all. He desires to sink himself completely. And yet he wants to be *conscious* that God is all in all. He is no weary sigher for self-annihilation. To have everything cease to be, including God, would be to him the worst of calamities. No; in his experience of the Allness of God, he desires *his own consciousness to be at its highest tension.*

This experience involves *self-consciousness* of a certain sort, for, though he does not always see it, the more real becomes his consciousness of God, the more real becomes his *consciousness of himself as conscious of God.* Every fiber of his higher self is awake and active. Tennyson's description of his "waking trances," though they were not of a deeply religious type, illustrates this:

> This [a kind of waking trance] has come upon me through repeating my own name to myself silently, till all at once, as it were out of the intensity of individuality, individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being, and this not a confused state but the clearest, the surest of the surest, utterly beyond words. At another time, as recalled by Tyndall, Tennyson said of this state, It is no nebulous ecstasy, but a state of transcendent wonder, associated with absolute clearness of mind.[9]

[9] See Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 384, Note.

As one reads the narrative of the states of apparent unconsciousness in which some of the mediæval mystics believed they came into the closest communion with God, the query rises whether—apart from the question of the normality of these experiences—psychology, or, if not psychology, then humanity, will not come to the conclusion promulgated by Hudson some years ago, that there is no real, that is, complete, *unconsciousness*, that the spiritual mind, or the self, is by its very nature ever wakeful and cognizant, in sleep, in coma, in all apparently unconscious states.[10] *This higher spiritual consciousness of ours which keeps us in touch with the spiritual universe corresponds to yet contrasts with the subconsciousness which unites us with the physical universe.* It may be called a *superconsciousness* by means of which, even while we are occupied with more immediate concerns, there break in upon us flashes from that larger world of which we are already a part.[11]

IV

As to *suggestion*, in its relation to mysticism, it would require an entire volume to discuss

[10] "The subjective mind is ever awake during the sleep of the body and ever active" (Hudson: The Law of Psychic Phenomena, p. 180).

[11] This may be what Professor James really meant, though he failed to distinguish it clearly from the physical subconsciousness.

what suggestion is, and several more to discuss the relationship between it and mysticism.

If one were to take the definition of suggestion given by Boris Sidis, there is apparently little connection between it and mysticism:

> By suggestion is meant the intrusion into the mind of an idea, met with more or less opposition by the person; accepted uncritically at last; and realized unreflectively, almost automatically.[12]

The mystic's ideas are not intrusive, uncritical, and unreflective, though they are often so regarded. And yet the mystic is certainly one who has what Münsterberg would say is the characteristic of suggestion—"a belief in an idea, an acceptance of the idea as real, and the dismissal of the opposite idea as unreal."[13] In fact, he may be called, as Boutroux intimates, a man of one idea, a monoidealist. This, however, as Boutroux goes on to say, is no discredit; for every genius, in fact every one with a mission, is in a sense, a person of one idea.[14] It is, however, the character and relative value of the idea—provided it be not too exclusive—that determines sanity, and not its dominance.

[12] The Psychology of Suggestion, p. 15.
[13] Psychotherapy, p. 100.
[14] La Psychologie du Mysticisme, pp. 19, 20.

"In such cases as Kant and Beethoven," says Von Hügel, "a classifier of humanity according to its psycho-physical phenomena alone would put these great discoverers and creators, without hesitation, amongst hopeless and useless hypochondriacs."[15] Yet, if this is insanity, most of us would like more of it. Indeed, one might well call a person insane whose ideas were all on the same level, the higher failing to rule the lower.

As between suggestion and autosuggestion, the mystic ranks as an autosuggestionist rather than as one who takes suggestion readily from others. He is reflective rather than mercurial, inhibiting ideas that do not commend themselves to his deeper spiritual intuition and judgment. As such he is the conservator of true religion and moral values, the foe alike of conventional and of hysterical ideas and activities.

If one would know the extent of the evil which these two latter types of mind—the conventional and the hysterical—have wrought, let him study, on the one side, the history of blind, unreflective religious conservatism, with its obscurantism, its sluggishness, its persecutions, its inquisitions, its heresy-hunting, and, on the other, the history of mental epi-

[15] Vol. ii, p. 42, quoted by Miss Underhill, Mysticism, p. 72.

demics, as he will find it outlined, for example, in Part III of Sidis's Psychology of Suggestion. It is to the mystic mind, as well as to the common-sense, rational mind,—quiet, self-assured, yet daring, and having something besides criticism to offer,—that the progress toward religious sanity and true faith has been largely due.

In a sense, therefore, the mystic doubtless uses autosuggestion. But to allow that term to explain the nature of mysticism, or to decide the question of its objective reality, would be like defining love as a physical instinct and stopping with that. Love is a physical instinct, and more. Mysticism may be autosuggestive and more.

There is both suggestion and autosuggestion, thinks Bishop Brent, in *prayer;* but if so, that does not remove from it the character of communion with God.

> Prayer, which is at once an appeal to the Source of Life to let loose saving health in our direction and an opening of our being for the reception of hidden and unknown aid, is a higher form of psychic effort than either suggestion or autosuggestion, in that it includes both, though not precluding the concurrent use of either.[16]

[16] The Sixth Sense, p. 45.

"Autosuggestion," as Rufus M. Jones says, "may be only another way of saying that God and man are conjunct in the soul, and that, in the deeps of the soul, beyond our power of knowing how, Divine suggestions come to human consciousness."[17]

Psychology has undoubtedly opened a line of attack by which the detractors of the mystical—to their own satisfaction and sometimes to the consternation of such as are easily overcome by superficial reasoning—may resolve religious experience away. On the other hand, rightly interpreted, psychology has greatly reemphasized the significance of the mystical element in religion and has shown how deeply it grounds in our total nature and constitution.

[17] Studies in Mystical Religion, p. xxxiii.

CHAPTER VII

NORMAL MYSTICISM

As one looks back over its history mysticism appears an almost shoreless sea—intangible in its nature, multitudinous in its expression, swept by diverse winds and currents. And yet, with all its inclusiveness and wealth of meaning, its variations, its inconsistencies, its paradoxes, there is in it an untroubled deep, an underlying motive which gives it unity. It exalts spirit. It finds in life eternal realities and values. "The mystic is one who sees all things in God."[1] Not that God is conceived in the same way by all the mystics. Their conceptions of him differ widely, some identifying him with Nature, others with Spirit; some conceiving him as the All, others as a Person. Yet to all alike he is the Supreme Reality.

This common principle serves to set off mysticism from all attitudes of mind which either *deny the existence of God*, or, admitting it, *fail to make him real*, and thus to "see all things in him." Mysticism is radically opposed,

[1] George A. Gordon: "The Mystic and his Ideal," Revelation and the Ideal, p. 86.

that is, to all forms of naturalism, skepticism, positivism, agnosticism, rationalism, and institutionalism. Denial of God, or of direct access to him, is to the mystical mind the one great error and blindness, the one measureless loss.

That this consciousness of God is vital, and radically affects life and conduct, can hardly be open to doubt. That which chiefly concerns us in this chapter is to further *differentiate within mysticism*, to distinguish between its essential and peripheral, its normal and abnormal, forms and developments. In order to do this more fully let us make a brief review of mysticism in its broader aspects.

I

Three interblending but distinguishable mystical currents flow through the history of religion. The first may be called instinctive mysticism, the second contemplative or reflective mysticism, and the third personal mysticism.

The first, *instinctive, or natural, mysticism*, is characterized by its close association with sense experience and its comparative lack of reflection. It is uppermost in many phases of primitive religion, in certain crude social cults, and in nature worship. It may be induced by or accompany either the inhibiting or the stimu-

lating of sensation. In the form of sense *inhibition* it is found in the Yoga, in various mystery cults, in the self-denial of the anchorites and certain of the monastic orders, and in the asceticisms of the mediæval saints. In the form of sense *stimulation* it is present in the social phenomena of the mystery religions, in various religious enthusiasms, and in lower types of church revivals. The highest expression of this form of mysticism is in the sensitive response to nature on the part of nature lovers and poets.

Contemplative or reflective mysticism finds its chief embodiment in the Platonic type of mysticism. Relying as it does upon intuition as the method of reaching truth, and thus attesting itself as essentially mystical, Platonic mysticism nevertheless puts truth somewhat at a distance, to be known by beholding rather than by communion, to be attained or verified by dialectic. It thus tends toward abstraction and speculation rather than toward personal realization. Contemplative mysticism passed from Platonism to Neoplatonism and thence into the speculative mysticism of Dionysius and Erigena and greatly influenced the subsequent history of mysticism. In modern philosophy it has had its representatives in such thinkers as Spinoza and Emerson. Its

tendency has been to pass out of the mystical into the rationalistic atmosphere. Yet it has always avoided pure rationalism.

The third form of mysticism, *personal mysticism*, finds its center in personal relationships and values and the inner secret of reality in personal communion with a personal God.[2] One may detect its beginnings in the prototheism of early religion. From primitive mysticism religion moved either toward the removal of God to a distance, where he was all but lost amid the urgent claims of practical polytheism, or toward an ever clearer, deeper, and more intimate conception of and communion with the Divine Person. In personal mysticism the Hebrew mind was foremost, as was the Greek in contemplative mysticism. Moses, the prophets, the psalmists, Jesus, Paul—these are the predecessors of a great company of personal mystics including Augustine, Saint Francis, Luther, Wesley, George Fox, Jonathan Edwards, Frederick Robertson, John G. Whittier, Phillips Brooks, and countless others.

In this latter form of mysticism and this body of mystics are found the strongest evidences of normality. These are the salt of the earth, the leaven hid in the meal, the light of

[2] Of course these types of mysticism shade off into each other, but that does not make the distinction less valid.

the world. Not that there are not mystics of the other two types who have been as lights in the world. Not that personal features are wholly absent from the instinctive mysticism which finds spiritual revelations in nature, and in the contemplative mysticism which leads to rational and profound interpretation of truth and life; but the personal character of truth is too subordinate in these forms.

Personal mysticism, while it is characterized by the child spirit, is not therefore unreflective and immature. It may be such in the eyes of that "wisdom of this world which is foolishness," but in the real maturity which has returned from youthful wandering after distant truths to the homeland of the great, simple, inexhaustible realities that lie beneath the surface of the life, personal mysticism is incomparably rich.

II

Without seeking to fix any arbitrary canons, as a result of our study, we may arrive at certain conclusions as to what constitutes normal mysticism, which may be summed up thus:

1. Mysticism is most normal when it is anchored to the experience of God as a Personal Presence and avoids all speculation which does not flow out of and return to this experi-

ence. When speculation, as in the case of the Neoplatonic mystics, gets away from experience it is like a kite that has broken its cord. Only as it is held firmly to experience can it rise steadily to its greatest height.

If it be asked, "What, then, is religious experience?" care must be taken not to identify experience with mere feeling. It is, rather, as Schleiermacher held, both intuition and feeling. It is the certainty that attaches to self-consciousness and the consciousness of others. It is the sense of reality which ensues when one person communes with another. It is the confidence that comes,

> When one who loves and knows not
> Learns from one who loves and knows.

It is the truth, that is, that not only comes through personality but is itself personal truth.[3]

2. Mysticism is wholly normal only when it enters into *service* of some kind, either in active helpfulness or unselfish suffering.

The mystics of the Orders, such as Francis, Bernard, Clara, Francis of Sales, Teresa, Vincent de Paul, exemplified an active mysticism. A wholly introspective, self-centered mysticism

[3] "Practically, our knowledge of God is personal knowledge. The knowledge of a person is easier, more direct, more certain, than the knowledge of a proposition. . . . We know whom we have believed" (M. H. Buckham: The Very Elect, p. 27).

cannot be other than abnormal, however refined may be the results it produces in self-discipline and devotion. Yet there is more than one form of service, and those who are shut out of active service may, by prayer and vicarious bearing of suffering—whether it be their own which has come upon them through a disturbed moral order, or that of others—fulfill a true ministry of service. Through the deepening sense of the solidarity of humanity we are coming to see that love-suffering is a vital part of the great redemptive process and that he who accepts suffering, or limitation, in this spirit, is helping, with Jesus, to bear, and so to bear away, the sin of the world. This essentially mystical experience places suffering in a new and transforming light.

3. That only is normal mysticism which, however deeply it seeks to enter into communion with the Divine, never passes the bounds of reverence, either in reality or in expression. It would be captious, let me repeat, as well as irreverent, to criticize, with cold nonchalance, such saints as Teresa, Henry Suso, Juan of the Cross, Madame Guyon, and David Brainerd; and yet we cannot regard such extremes of piety, however admirable, as wholly normal.

It is true that we have found the *mystic way* and its stages to be grounded in general spiritual

experience, and that counterparts of purgation, illumination, and even of ecstasy are to be traced in normal present-day religious experience. But the extremes to which all these experiences were often carried in mediæval mysticism cannot but seem to us, not unreal—for in one sense they are most real and vivid—but out of keeping with the harmony of a sane and well-balanced life.

4. That only is normal mysticism—indeed, mysticism at all—which avoids completely the magical, whether in occultism, spiritualism, ritualism, sacerdotalism, or any other form. Mysticism and magic are opposing terms.

5. Mysticism is wholly normal only when it keeps God, not apart from nature, but distinct from nature. Whether speculatively, as in Jacob Boehme's monism, or practically, as in the cosmic mysticism of Bucke, Whitman, and others, God is too closely identified with the cosmos, the result is a defective sense of the transcendent worth of personality and is likely to lead to a depreciation of ethical values. What is needed, as Bergson has said, is "to see the life of the body just where it really is—on the road that leads to the life of the spirit."

6. Above all, Christian mysticism is normal only when it keeps in close touch with Jesus Christ. It is, in one way, surprising to

see how far Christian mysticism has at times wandered from its orbit of fealty to Christ. The Dionysian, speculative, absolutistic type of mysticism is, in fact, quite as much, if not more, Hellenic than Christian. It is Neoplatonism flowing on under Christian skies. So influential was this type of mysticism in the Middle Ages that many regarded it as the very essence of mysticism.[4] Yet it is, in reality, a deflection from the original and normal Christian mysticism communicated by Jesus to his disciples and concentrated in Paul's "in Christ" mysticism.

Although this personal, Christ-filled mysticism has at times received less of *literary expression*, it has been vital and saline always. In the great organizing and ministrant mystics, like Saint Francis, Teresa, Catherine of Genoa, Vincent de Paul; in the Friends of God; in Jacob Boehme and William Law, and later in Pietism; in Wesleyanism, and even in Evangelicalism—where it has burned on amid much doctrinal dross—it has shown itself the power of God unto salvation even to our own day. It is true that this Christ mysticism became at times widely detached from the historic Jesus.

[4] Instances of this recur constantly in philosophical and historical as well as theological discussions of mysticism. As a recent instance the article by Professor Loofs, "Lutheranism and Mysticism," in The Constructive Quarterly of December, 1914, may be cited. See especially p. 741.

In some of its phases, as in the trance-mysticism of mediæval saints and in the self-suppression of the Quietists, it displayed abnormal and often repellent features. Yet it is altogether too potent and pervasive a manifestation of the universal Christian spirit to be regarded, as it has been by Ritschlianism, as a Roman Catholic type of piety. Professor Hermann treats mysticism itself as in its very nature a Christ-minimizing form of piety.[5] On the contrary, barring the speculative current of which we have just been speaking, mysticism would seem to be, on the whole, deeply Christo-centric. True, its Christ, as in the case of Paul himself, is the living, indwelling Christ rather than the historic Jesus; yet the latter, at least among the practical mystics, is by no means forgotten, but is, on the contrary, ever present and determinative in the background, as the ideal divine-human revelation of God. We maintain that the personal, Christo-centric form of mysticism is its most normal and vital form.

III

In the several forms of historic mysticism—including the personal—are to be found many exaggerated and one-sided developments and

[5] See his Communion with God.

intensifications of truths beyond their due. Indeed, we have discovered deficiencies and limitations attending the very nature of mysticism which require to be supplemented in the interest of life as a whole. All of these—both exaggerations and limitations—arise from the same cause, which we may perhaps call the *tendency to religious specialization.*

In fact, mysticism, just because it is religion in its purest and most characteristic form, is prone to push the claims of religion—if one may so speak—to excess, overweighting the natural balance and proportion of life.

Is it possible, then, to be too religious? Can one possess too much of this best and highest of all good things? Yes, if religion is understood in one way; no, if understood in another. An arresting and significant sentence of Baron von Hügel may serve us here. It is this: "Our entire religious activity is but one element of our complete spiritual life." Religion itself, that is, does not compass the entire impact of God upon human life, although it constitutes the heart of it and hallows the whole. Human life is marvelously wide and varied and absorbing in its interests and activities. It is just this fact that may be either its glory or its curse. That it has been too often its curse is the fact that many a world-fearing mystic has seen and

sought to escape, even at the cost of the impoverishment and mutilation of life. Offended by his right hand, he has cut it off, and by his right eye, he has plucked it out, and thus has entered, though maimed, into life. That this is far better than having both hands and eyes to be cast into the hell of materialism, sensuality, and worldliness there can be no doubt. And yet denial, impoverishment, mutilation is not the ideal life. It is, as Jesus implies, an expedient for the divided life—a resort for the beleaguered man rather than a principle for the free man. Jesus himself came eating and drinking, taking life with a generous and victorious freedom, and so in the end will it be with his disciples. The new mysticism, as we have seen, is rightly seeking simplification, not by exclusion but by unification.

All of life is sacred and may mediate God to men. Science, art, commerce, industry, labor, society—all may be made holy. This is what the mystics of the past could not, except in rare instances and with limited vision, see. Therefore they sought to escape the perils of life by entering at once and as far as possible into the inner sanctuary of religion, whence they did not often enough emerge to transform life with the mystic vision. Thus they became too often priests only, and not also prophets.

IV

Granted that mysticism has a place at the very heart of life and has proven itself invaluable to a large number of men and women, is it adapted to *all?* Can it meet this searching test of normality—*adaptability?*[6] Can it be shown to be an experience, not necessarily restricted to an especial type or temperament, but so deeply and thoroughly human that without it, in some form, no one can realize his true selfhood? That is much the same as asking if a personal religious experience of some sort is possible to every man. In view of the almost limitless divergences of human personality, this is a bold assumption. Mysticism has not made it in any assertive or propagandist fashion, yet it is implicit in its very nature. However deficient in endowment he may be, however steeped in sin, Christianity assumes that every man is capable of religion. In saying "*If any man is athirst,*" it is implied that *every man is athirst,* for he is made for God, as Augustine said, and cannot rest until he rests in him.

There is, to be sure, a great difference in the degree of religious susceptibility among men; but upon closer view this is seen to be, in part

[6] This question has been already broached in the chapter, "Cosmic Mysticism," but its importance calls for further consideration.

at least, a predisposition toward a given *form* of experience only. Mysticism, like religion itself, of which it is the core, has, as we have seen, many forms and manifestations. Sometimes it is intense and passionate; again it is serene and reflective. It has many forms of expression. One mystic, like Anthony, cleaves to his cave; another, like Thomas à Kempis, to his cell; another engages in untiring activity, like Saint Francis; one, like Joan of Arc, battles; another, like Saint Teresa, prays without ceasing; one elects to preach, agitate, reform, like Savonarola; another, like Fra Angelico, to paint pictures; one, like Luther, is robust and energetic; another, like Catherine of Siena, delicate and anemic.

Professor Hocking, commenting upon the diversities of mysticism, writes as follows:

> But note well that while the mystic of genius is a natural product, the mystic impulse is not a matter of special temperament, for there are mystics in all temperaments. This incentive is deep enough in human nature to take various forms according to the disposition of the mind. . . . There are practical and world-moving mystics as well as dreamy ones. . . . The love of God also will be colored by every defect of the lover.[7]

[7] The Meaning of God in Human Experience, p. 361.

The term "mystic" has been quite too commonly confined to the more intense and impassioned of their number. The impression has thus been formed that, because the less highly endowed of men have no very intense religious experiences, these exceptional saints are the only mystics. It would be far more reasonable, instead of confining mysticism to its conspicuous representatives, to make due account of its differing degrees and varieties. One must take into account, for instance, the difference between a Scotch mystic and a Negro mystic. As Boutroux has said: "Taking the word 'mysticism' in its large historic sense, it does not seem that one has the right to class the mystics among the sick (*malades*)."[8] Indeed, it might be truer to say that the man who has no mysticism in him is the abnormal man. One wonders if it were not mysticism, under cover of music, that Shakespeare had in mind when he said that its absence indicated fitness "for treason, stratagems, and spoils." At all events, the person who is entirely without a touch of mysticism in him is a rarity. As Father Tyrrell said: "Every one is something of a mystic, no one is nothing but a mystic."[9]

[8] La Psychologie du Mysticisme, p. 6.
[9] See Hibbert Journal, vol. x, 2, p. 428.

V

The mystic mind shades off into the general religious mind so imperceptibly that a comprehensive history of mysticism would be almost coincident with a history of religion itself in its deeper underflow. To select here and there a person or a group of persons to be entitled mystics means to pass by myriads of others, many, perhaps, quite as worthy of the name. There are, it is true, exceptional mystics, who are in the van of the religious life, and when we speak of *the* mystics it is to them that we refer. But they are only the leaders. The great company of mystics is more than can be numbered, out of every nation and of all tribes and peoples, standing before the throne and serving Him day and night in his temple.

There are, it is true, many apparently "non-religious" persons. But there is no telling when the most irreligious of men may be shaken to the very center of his being by an experience that quickly transfers him to the ranks of the mystics. To err is human; to be spiritually callous is human; but to be spiritually-minded is still more human. Schleiermacher goes so far as to say, "Supposed instances of a human self-consciousness that is destitute of the God-consciousness disappear on close analysis, except

in those individuals whose intelligence is entirely undeveloped."[11]

The question whether a man can be normal without being religious is by no means settled when you have pointed to the plentiful number of desirable citizens and good neighbors who attend no church, subscribe to no creed, and engage in no stated forms of devotion. Millions have religious experiences, more or less intense, who have never avowed them, and other millions might have them who have not. We must go deeper than the outer forms and ask whether there is not some mystic spring in every normal person, hidden perhaps even from himself, that is secretly watering his life and giving it worth and verdure. It is an assertion quite within the bounds of moderation that one cannot be really *good* without being, in some sort and degree, mystical; without having, that is, something of the tenderness and sympathy for his fellow men and of outreach toward a life beyond the world of sense inseparable from personal faith. Until this faith is awakened in a man he is subhuman, abnormal.

A serious oversight has been made in overlooking the social nature of mysticism. While it is true that the typical mystics are in the best sense individualists, and while mysticism tends

[11] Cross: The Theology of Schleiermacher, p. 154.

to develop all the distinctive highest capacities of the individual, it is also true that it gives the individual fullest and freest touch with his fellows and also that it exists in and enriches the lives of men and women who seem incapable of rising to any very marked individual religious life of their own. Such persons are not to be set down either as nonentities or nonmystics. "They are," as Dr. W. M. MacGregor says of them, "faithful, sober, reverent, and, on occasion, they may reveal depths of Christian feeling, but they have little knowledge of the solitudes of God. Their life is rooted in the community and whatever color and fragrance and fruitfulness it exhibits, would seem to be determined by influences which are common."[12]

But does not this inclusion of a social type of mysticism directly contradict our definition of mysticism as an *immediate* experience? I think not. The experience comes to the individual in any case only relatively *alone*. He is dependent upon his membership in a religious community. And whether the experience comes to one in solitude, or in company with his fellows and through sense *media*, it is still *his* and is recognized as such by him.

Unless religion is the dominating power in human relationships, society is less than human.

[12] Christian Freedom, p. 372.

It took the insight of Jesus to brand the non-mystical type of life in one graphic, consuming sentence: "They ate, they drank, they planted, they builded, they married, they were given in marriage until——." Something is bound to happen to a civilization like that. It cannot continue. Either it goes down in wreck and flood, or it finds again its spiritual heritage.

Only a society in which the mystical—that is, the religious—element is awakened and active, imparting to life idealism, sympathy, devotion, can be normal. After all, the question is not whether mysticism can meet the test of normality, but whether *life without it can be normal.*

Part III

VALUES OF MYSTICISM

"Hold fast that which is good."

CHAPTER VIII

LESSONS FROM THE MYSTICS

I

Mysticism teaches three great lessons in truth. The first is *to look for reality within.* It is thus that the mystics find God, by turning from outward proof and argument to the inner witness of the soul itself. Many mystics discovered this only after long years of search. Thus Augustine cried, "I was seeking Thee outside of myself, and could not find the God of my heart."[1] "I asked Thy creatures of Thee," wrote Fénelon, "and not once thought of finding Thee in the depths of my heart, where Thou hadst never ceased to dwell."[2] "Halt! whither runnest thou? Heaven is in thee; seekest thou God otherwhere, thou missest him ever and ever," exclaimed Angelus Silesius.[3] Madame Guyon sought for God in vain until her confessor told her to seek him within. Then she knocked and it was opened unto her.

[1] Confessions, vi, 1. [2] Christian Counsels, ii.
[3] Steiner: Mystics of the Renaissance, p. 260.

Thus it has been with the mystics as a whole. That downright, honest-hearted mystic who did more perhaps than any man of our time to arouse men to a sense of reality, Tolstoy, has described for us in words of burning sincerity his vain search for God through the understanding, and how, finally, after years of despair and living upon the verge of suicide, the light came to him on a day in spring in the woodland:

> I had only to know God and I lived; I had only to forget him, not to believe in him, and I died. What was this discouragement and revival? I do not live when I lose faith in the existence of God; I should long ago have killed myself if I had not had a dim hope of finding him. I really live only when I am conscious of him and seek him. "What more, then, do I seek?" a voice seemed to cry within me. "This is He, He without whom there is no life. To know God and to live are one. God is life. Live, to seek God, and life will not be without God." And stronger than ever rose up life within and around me, and the light that then shone never left me again.[4]

So, also, *Christ* is to be found within, not in the heights nor the depths, but in the heart.

[4] My Confession, chap. xii.

He, indeed, *is* God within. Tauler closes his striking sermon from the text, "What went ye out into the wilderness for to see?" with the words:

> Hence we have need of the true Moses, even Jesus Christ, that he may at all times guide and lead us, and draw us to himself, so that we may go out after him into the wilderness of our own hearts, wherein God lies hidden to us. May God help us all to attain thereto!

This insistence upon the *withinness* rather than the *withoutness* of reality is not, of course, a spatial distinction with the mystics. It is, rather, an insistence upon the personal, as distinguished from the nonpersonal, as the true abiding place of the Divine.

God, Christ, truth, holiness, all lie—the mystic is ever assuring us—in the inner spirit world. All who seek ultimate reality in the external world with the scientist, or in the world of sense with the hedonist, or in the past with the historian, or in the world of pure ideas with the philosopher, are doomed to miss it. The inner door is the entrance to reality. It is here too that religious certainty alone is to be found. Not in church, or book, or creed, but in the whisper of the still small Voice. "It is the Inner Witness, my son," said Samuel

Wesley to John, "the Inner Witness." Only after all outward search is abandoned and one turns to the world within, will he find what he seeks and what every soul, when it awakes, must desire above everything else.

II

A second lesson in truth taught us by the mystics is, *to find meaning in mystery.* To the scientist, as such, mystery is a challenge, a foe, a problem to be attacked and resolved into its understandable factors. For the purposes of science this is the only right attitude. Let us not fail to recognize to the full the value of science. Without her it would have gone hard with humanity. For, as far as the mystic is concerned, we might still be groping in a semicivilized world. Not that the mystic is superstitious. Superstition is as far from his frame of mind as from that of the scientist; but as relates to the material world he is not concerned with finding out its secrets—at least, not after the manner of the scientist—or with utilizing to the full its resources. The world has another meaning to him than that. Its mystery to him is prescient, purposeful, prophetic. It invests him, yet does not oppress him, for he feels that within it are veiled great and gracious meanings. The mystic would

not choose to live in a world where everything is understood, to the last and least item. To him such a world would be commonplace, mechanical, unworthy of God, the God who "hideth himself," not in order to conceal himself, but because he can reveal himself only to the inquiring mind and heart.

III

A third and kindred truth-lesson of mysticism is *to find the eternal in the temporal.* This, as Inge asserts, is the very heart of mysticism, regarded from the point of view of truth. At first it seems as if the essence of mysticism were to find the eternal *apart from* the temporal. It is a characteristic doctrine of one type of mysticism, that to reach the eternal and unchangeable one must detach himself completely from the world of things, from sight and sound and touch of everything temporal, and fly to the Abyss, the Darkness, the Silence. Dionysius and Erigena and Eckhart are not the only mystics who teach this. It is found throughout doctrinal mysticism. Jacob Boehme's first dialogue of The Supersensual Life begins:

> The disciple said to his Master: Sir, how may I come to the Supersensual Life, so that I may

see God and hear God speak? The Master answered and said: Son, when thou canst throw thyself into THAT, where no creature dwelleth, though it be but for a moment, then thou hearest what God speaketh. Disciple: Is that where no creature dwelleth near at hand, or is it afar off? Master: It is *in thee*. And if thou canst, my son, for a while but cease from all thy thinking and willing, then thou shalt hear the unspeakable words of God. Disciple: How can I hear him speak when I stand still from thinking and willing? Master: When thou standest still from the thinking of self and the willing of self. When both thy intellect and will are quiet and passive to the expressions of the Eternal word and Spirit; and when thy soul is winged up and above that which is temporal, the outward senses and the imagination being locked up by holy abstraction, then the Eternal Hearing, Seeing, and Speaking will be revealed in thee, and so God heareth and seeeth through thee, being now the organ of his Spirit, and so God speaketh in *thee*, and whispereth to the Spirit, and thy spirit heareth his voice.

Yet, when the searcher after the eternal has thus renounced and transcended the temporal in order to attain the eternal, he comes back with it, so to speak—unless he is too loath to linger, as the supermystics were, in the realm of the transcendent—into the world of time

and sense and finds the eternal set in the heart of things. Boehme detects something supersensual in the "jovial luster" of the burnished kettle and then finds it again in the grass and trees and all things. To him the eternal has become the secret of the universe. Thus the world is transformed into something symbolical, allegorical, translucent. Through it gleam and flash the revelations of the eternal. All order is a reflection of eternal order. All beauty is a mirror of eternal beauty. As Angelus Silesius wrote:

> The rose whose beauty glads thine eyes to see,
> Blossomed in God ere time began to be.

All the noblest nature mysticism finds its secret gladness and inspiration in this immanence of the eternal in the temporal. Wordsworth beholds it as the "flashing of a shield." Emerson hears it as a melody, "a sky-born music."

> 'Tis not in the high stars alone,
> Nor in the cups of budding flowers,
> Nor in the redbreast's mellow tone,
> Nor in the bow that smiles in showers,
> But in the mud and scum of things
> There alway, alway, something sings.

This Reality that seems to the supermystic

in his "flight of the alone to the Alone" to be the Divine Darkness, not only supersensuous but superrational, to the rational mystic seems the all-pervasive Reason, the Eternal Logos, the unfolding Revelation.

Mystical truth is clearly as far as possible from literalism. One who lingers within the walls of literalism has not attained unto the freedom of the House of Mysticism. He must escape the letter before he can enter into the spirit. "For while I read the Scriptures in the letter," wrote Augustine, "I was slain in the spirit."[5] There is, to be sure, a species of literalism among the mystics. It is literalism in the application of truth, not in its conception. Truth, for him, is ever fresh and free and untrammeled.

Nor has pure *intellectualism* any affinity with the mystic mind. Not that mysticism lacks in intellectual vigor and acumen; but when the intellectual becomes so regnant and repressive as to pass over into the dry, cold, critical temper it has lost all touch with vital reality.[6] It is not the intellect primarily according to mysticism, as we have seen, that makes seizure of ultimate truths. The power by which such truths are grasped and held—swift, strong,

[5] Confessions, v, 14.
[6] Part ii, chap. ii.

unerring, unrelaxing—is, in the language of philosophy, intuition, in the language of religion, faith.

Thus it sometimes happens that these two faculties, the intuitive and the intellectual, are pitted against each other—the one representing the life of spiritual self-consecration, the other that of intellectual selfishness. The experience of Frances Willard affords an illustration. The crisis in her religious experience occurred during an almost fatal illness in her twentieth year, in which, as she writes:

> Two voices seemed to speak within me, one of them saying: "My child, give me thine heart. I called thee long by joy, I call thee now by chastisement." The other said: "Surely, you who are so resolute and strong will not break down now because of physical feebleness. You are a reasoner and never yet were you convinced of the reasonableness of Christianity. Hold out now and you will feel when you get well, just as you used to feel."[7]

She finally yielded to the first voice and became an avowed Christian. This experience is interesting as illustrating a not uncommon conflict between two faculties not in themselves hostile, but which may become so unless the

[7] Glimpses of Fifty Years, p. 686.

intellect assents to the deeper reason. It is only when "heart and mind, according well, make one music" that the soul is at peace with itself.

IV

Three great lessons in *valuation* the mystics have for us. The first is *the value of true solitude*. He who thinks that the mystics sought solitude as a penance makes a great mistake. Thomas à Kempis went to his cell, as Emerson went to his "sylvan home," drawn by its unfailing attraction and power of enrichment. Solitude, to the mystics, is a state not only of sweetness but of strength. It is in solitude, they feel, that a man gets his bearings, his calm, his poise. À Kempis was wont to insist, quoting Seneca, that as often as he went forth into the world he returned a poorer man.[8] "Let a man stand fast, then, as an axis of the earth," wrote a modern mystic, "the obsequious meridians will bow to him, and gracious latitudes will measure from his feet."[9] It was through solitude that the mystics gained their perspective, their large outlook upon life. Unlike world folk, they were not "made happy by a little gossip or a little praise." Alone, they

[8] "One said, 'As oft I have been among men, I returned home less a man than I was before' " (Imitation, chap. xx).

[9] Benjamin Paul Blood. . . . See "A Pluralistic Mystic," by William James, Hibbert Journal, vol. viii, 4, p. 754.

found themselves and God; and with shining faces they came forth, like the mystic Moses, cleansed, purified, enheartened, to their tasks. Solitude has often meant to the mystic, not *detachment*, in the negative sense, but *attachment*—a coming into relation with the larger life of humanity through reading and reflection. "The man," wrote Schiller, "who wants to be himself, who strives for inner harmony, must live as a stranger to his surroundings, a stranger to his time; he must remove himself from the belittling influences of the ambitions of the multitude, scorn all participation in quest for outward success; fill himself with what the best and finest of all ages have dreamed and accomplished; he must dwell in the idea of the beautiful."

Are we losing the grace of solitude out of our modern life, along with the sense of sin and the spirit of reverence? The modern man does not go apart with his cherished ideal, very much, to ask himself and his God how he may be a better man. We are apt to be more anxious over our bills to-day than over our sins. We are more absorbed in our schemes than in our ideals. It is a sordid and abnormal frame of mind. We are in constant danger of degeneration through our materialisms. Spiritual simians may live in stone fronts as well as

in trees. To-day he who has any desire to be alone for his soul's good is too apt to be looked upon askance as a survival from an age when mankind was afflicted with a mental disease called *piety*—a strange hallucination that life is too serious a matter to be lived without Divine help—times of ignorance which men now wink at. Of course I do not mean that this attitude of mind is universal, but it has its area, and a wide one. Little does it know of the wealth of true solitude.

There is something else which we are in serious danger of losing along with solitude, as its close dependent, and that is true social life. For society needs solitude as a source of supply. How can men gain their best thoughts, affections, aspirations, how can they develop personalities with which to enrich society, without solitude? When this fails society will suffer. We may still have "company"—the simians are gregarious—but not true social life. Let the mystics teach us to recover the grace of solitude, not to overvalue it, not to undervalue simple, wholesome human intercourse, but to keep the two in right and responsive relation to each other.

V

A second lesson in valuation coming to us

from the mystics is *the wealth of simplicity.* Stripping life of its accessories, to them meant adding to its fundamental values. Lady Poverty became Lady Bountiful to Saint Francis. Relaxing the clutch upon *mine* meant the opening of the hand to receive larger riches. "All things are yours" becomes a reality as one becomes Christ's.

There is something prophetic, as well as pathetic, in the wistfulness with which men look back to the period of childhood as approaching most nearly the ideal life of the soul. Again and again the yearning finds expression. Sometimes it is in a tone of hopeless lament. Sometimes it foreshadows a new and richer childhood—as when Bunyan exclaimed in his darkness, "I wished with all my heart that I might be a little child again." The experience of the mystics as a whole offers a striking exemplification of the saying of Christ as to the life of the Kingdom consisting in a *renewed childhood.* Not that such a life has the weaknesses and limitations of childhood, but, rather, its vision, its faith, its confiding communion. Two descriptions of the spiritual significance of childhood of rare beauty and significance have lately fallen to our possession. One is from the pen of that uproarious modern mystic whose cheerful and

intrepid faith has been a tonic to our depressed and be-problemed time, Chesterton. It occurs in his volume Orthodoxy, and is entitled "The Ethics of Elfland." The other is from the seventeenth-century mystic, Thomas Traherne, whose Centuries of Meditations was first published by Bertram Dobell in 1908. Describing his childhood, Traherne says, in the "Third Century":

> I was a little stranger, which at my entrance into the world was saluted and surrounded with innumerable joys. My knowledge was Divine. I knew by intuition those things which, since my Apostasy, I collected again by the highest reason. My very ignorance was advantageous. I seemed as one brought into the Estate of Innocence. All things were spotless and pure and glorious: yea, and infinitely mine, and joyful and precious. . . . The corn was orient and immortal wheat, which never should be reaped, nor was ever sown. I thought it had stood from everlasting to everlasting. The dust and stones of the street were as precious as gold: the gates were at first the end of the world. The green trees when I first saw them through one of the gates transported and ravished me, their sweetness and unusual beauty made my heart to leap, and almost mad with ecstasy, they were such strange and wonderful things. The Men! O what venerable and reverend

creatures did the aged seem! Immortal Cherubims! And young men glittering and sparkling Angels, and maids strange seraphic pieces of life and beauty. Boys and girls tumbling in the street, and playing, were moving jewels. I knew not that they were born or should die; but all things abided eternally as they were in their proper places. Eternity was manifested in the light of the Day, and something infinite behind everything appeared; which talked with my expectation and moved my desire. The city seemed to stand in Eden, or to be built in Heaven. The streets were mine, the temple was mine, the people were mine, their clothes and gold and silver were mine, as much as their sparkling eyes, fair skins, and ruddy faces. The skies were mine, and so were the sun and moon and stars, and all the world was mine; and I the only spectator and enjoyer of it. I knew no churlish properties, nor bounds, nor divisions; but all properties and divisions were mine: all treasures and the possessors of them. So that with much ado I was corrupted, and made to learn the dirty devices of this world. Which now I unlearn, and become, as it were, a little child again, that I may enter into the Kingdom of God.

If one desires a perfect commentary on the words of the Master concerning becoming a little child again, surely Thomas Traherne has written it.

VI

A third lesson in valuation the mystics bring home to us, the superiority of *being*, above *having* or *doing*. Many and earnest are the persuasions which the mystics utter against the subtle and deadening power of possession. The sense of *mine* is the root of all sin, as the author of the "Theologica Germanica" sees it. The penetrative sentence of Hawthorne, in which he describes Judge Pyncheon "with his landed estate, public honors, offices of trust, and other solid *unrealities*," well sums up the view which the mystics take of property. It was Hawthorne too—though he is not to be quoted as among the oracles of mysticism—who wrote, "Cursed be what by possession charms us." "Having" means little to the pure mystic.

Nor does "doing" mean to the mystic the height of attainment. He would not recognize that spirit of our day which condemns as useless everyone who does not "get out and do something." The mystic too believes in doing things—and does them. But his *doing* grows so naturally out of his inner life that what he does carries his whole personality with it and gains its significance from that fact. What he most longs for is to "be"; he knows very well that he cannot then be barren or unfruitful. How true that ideal is the history of mysticism

proves. Even those quiet souls who have done little but live, or live and produce what, from the standpoint of the man of deeds, seem only "words, idle words"—like Dante, or Thomas à Kempis, or Alfred Tennyson, or Frederic Amiel (who made a flat failure of everything except the chief thing, life)—such are doing more to-day for the good of the world than those who have spent life in mere hectic and ill-ordered activity. After all, what did Jesus *do?* Organize, reform, agitate? No; a few years of teaching and healing—that was all. Yet what he *was* and *is* is making a new humanity.

Moreover, the mystics are well assured that the chief, the only way *to be,* is to come into touch with the Source of all being. Hence their strong insistence upon contemplation, which, when it is of the right sort, is itself true action. As Joubert wrote: "*Penser à Dieu est une action.*" Such thinking issues in conduct, as the seed develops into the flower. If, as Matthew Arnold said, conduct is three fourths of life, motive is three fourths of conduct; and the springs of motive lie far back in the hills where the receptive soul receives of the Divine Fullness.

VII

Three great lessons in *virtue* come to us

through the mystics. The first is *to find contentment in humility*. Nothing seems to the mystic more unreasonable, more contrary to a true and happy life, than the love of precedence, the effort to get the advantage of others. Strife, restlessness, unhappiness, spring —he conceives—from this root. He would therefore remove it completely and in its place plant lowly humility, the heart of contentment and true peace. Swedenborg offers a beautiful comment upon humility in his description of the conduct of the angels:

> As all good and truth come from above, so does all life. Because they believe this, angels refuse all thanks for the good they do, and are indignant and retire if anyone attributes good to them. They wonder that anyone should believe that he is wise of himself, and does good of himself.[10]

Nor is humility to the mystic a superhuman virtue, one that he puts on as a kind of badge of blessedness, upon which is inscribed: "Persuade yourself that you are worse than you are." No; he really sees and feels his imperfection. It is no make-believe with him. It is only necessary, he perceives, to know oneself, in order to be humble. "Whoso knoweth himself,"

[10] Heaven and Hell, ¶9.

writes Thomas à Kempis, "is lowly in his own eyes!" The mystic is the only one humble enough to take a rebuke, as Saint Francis took his of the rude peasant on the way to La Verna. This is the highest proof of humility. Until one is able to take a reproof—even though unjust—an injury, a slight, without smarting under it, he has not attained to the truest humility.

VIII

Another lesson in virtue which the mystics teach is *to find victory in self-sacrifice*. It is they, more than any others, who have caught the full meaning of Jesus's word, "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." This is the supreme paradox of the spiritual life—not to be reached by "plain common sense," or matter-of-fact living. It involves the principle of the *dual self* which few of the mystics worked out, although the philosophy of self-surrender was clear to them all. As Martineau wrote:

> Here we alight upon an interpretation of the doctrine [of prudence] characteristic of the Christian mystics—that *Self* is the center and essence of all Sin, and the *surrender of self* the one simple condition of union with God. . . . To have *no wish, no claim, no reluctance* to be taken hither or thither, but to yield oneself up as the organ of a higher spirit, which disposes

of us as may be fit, constitutes the mystic ideal of perfect life.[11]

The thoroughness with which the mystics enforced self-sacrifice, in teaching and practice, was heroic; yet self-sacrifice with them was never divorced from a larger end. With characteristic simplicity and depth Eckhart declared:

> Wo du mit deinem Willen und deinem Wissen wahrhaft ausgeht, da geht Gott wahrhaft und willig mit seinem Wissen ein und leuchtet da in Klarheit.[12]

Jacob Boehme makes the same assertion in another form:

> If thou forsakest the world, then thou comest into that out of which the world is made, and if thou losest thy life, then thy life is in that for whose sake thou forsakest it.[13]

The truth which Nettleship put so arrestingly, "To live is to die into something more perfect," has been richly verified in mystical experience.

IX

The third and crowning lesson in virtue which the mystics teach—a lesson also in truth

[11] Types of Ethical Theory, vol. ii, p. 79.

[12] Sermon: "Von der Dunkelheit." "When thou divestest thyself of thine own will and thine own wisdom then God freely and willingly enters, with his clear-shining wisdom."

[13] Dialogues of the Supersensual Life, ii.

and in value—is to find *self-fulfillment and happiness in love.* The unitive life, the highest summit of the mystic ascent, is a life of love. On this height, in this atmosphere, the goal is reached, the soul is at home, the self is fulfilled. This is the Christian Nirvana, attainable in this life, yet not attained, reached only in swift ecstatic experiences by all who follow the Christ in the mystic way. Faith in love, "the love of Love"—how it floods the mystic mind with joy, driving sorrow, defeat, doubt, dismay, afar! Love is the inner secret, the whole secret, the open secret, of mysticism. God is love, and truth is love, and life is love, was the message that came to men through the Christ. It awoke a response in many hearts. Men fled to the desert with the priceless secret. They sold all other pearls and bought this of great price; and yet they did not keep it. They gave it away, and the more they gave of it, the more they had of it. They lost it in the darkness of the world and of self, and found it again and rejoiced.

To the mystic love is able to transform even the most humdrum service and make it beautiful. That joyous saint of the pots and kettles, Brother Lawrence, gives this account of his experience, as related in the Conversations:

When outward business diverted him a little from the thought of *God*, a fresh remembrance coming from *God* invested his soul, and so inflamed and transported him, that it was difficult for him to restrain himself. Therefore he said:

That he was more united to God in his ordinary occupations than when he left them for devotion in retirement. . . . That the most excellent method which he had found of going to *God*, was that of *doing our common business* without any view of pleasing men, and (as far as we are capable) *purely for the love of God*.[14]

"Love is the fulfilling of the law," exclaimed the enfranchised mystic of Tarsus. "God is love," breathed the mystic seer of Ephesus. "Love is stronger than death," sang the mystic martyrs, and faced the lions and the flames undaunted. "Love can win all," caroled the mystic missionaries, and dared forest and frost and savage sword. "Love is more precious than the world and all its ambitions and pleasures," whispered the mystic monks and nuns, and withdrew into the monastery, the hermitage, the hospital. "Love is the final wisdom, the only freedom, the only bond of union," joyfully taught the Friends of God in Germany. "He that loveth, flieth, runneth,

[14] The Practice of the Presence of God, Third and Fourth Conversations.

and rejoiceth," wrote the tender-hearted author of the Imitation. "Divine Love is the mystic wound that heals the soul," confessed the Quietists. "Love is the highest excellency," echoed the voice of the mystic Edwards from the wilderness of the New World. "Love is the warmth diffused by the Inner Light," asseverated the Quakers. "Love is immortal," chanted the mystic threnodists of "Adonais" and "In Memoriam." "Love is the heart of melody," sang the mystic musicians, and wove its sacred sweetness through all their chords and symphonies. "Love is the root of righteousness, of holiness, of fidelity," proclaimed the mystic prophets and preachers, aflame with the love that never faileth. "Love is the only talisman that will insure social justice and human brotherhood and bring in the golden age of man," cried the mystic humanitarians, and, bathed in its puissance, have gone bravely to their regenerating toil.

All these have lived and wrought in the light of a great assurance. Knowing that love is the triumphant secret of the universe, they have "smiled to think God's greatness flows around our incompleteness—round our restlessness, His rest."

CHAPTER IX

THE TREASURY OF CHRISTIAN MYSTICAL LITERATURE

THE mystics have greatly enriched life. They have also greatly enriched literature. It is a saying of Maeterlinck that "a work can never grow old except in proportion to its anti-mysticism." Whatever qualification such a statement may need, certain it is that the books of deep and genuine mystical spirit, full of "old essential candors," possess a vitality greater than that of oaks and sequoias.

If we commence with the New Testament and pass in swift review some of the most precious volumes in the treasury of Christian mystical literature, it may seem a heterogeneous company of books that we bring together, from different ages and races and mental environments, yet it will serve to show the remarkable range and wealth of Christian mystical literature. No attempt at completeness will be made, and many a gem will doubtless be missed, as worthy of a place as some of those that are included.

I

The light of a new and surpassing era of the Spirit pervades the New Testament. The mystic note finds anticipatory utterance in the *Magnificat* and the *Benedictus*, with their sense of imminent and immeasurable good. The *Sermon on the Mount*, though a setting forth of the ethics of the Kingdom, is pervaded and vitalized by mystical teaching, without which it would be quite robbed of its warmth and motive power. The Beatitudes (Matt. 5. 3–12), the Appeal to Perfection (5. 48), the True Nature of Prayer and Fasting (6. 5–15), the Inner Light (6. 22, 23), the beautiful nature lesson of Freedom from Anxiety and Inner Calm (6. 25–34), the Way of Access to Infinite Bounty (7. 7–11) are all clad in mystic radiance. The parables too, especially the Kingdom parables—the Pearl of Great Price, the Mustard Seed, the Hid Treasure, the Net—are full of a suggestive wisdom and subtle beauty that reveal Jesus's deeply mystical spirit.

Much as there is of the mystic in Paul, none of his writings is a singly woven and consistent piece of mysticism. Yet there are passages in his letters which ensue upon the dash and fervor of argument, exhortation, and admonition, breathing a harmony, a depth, a universality, which make them masterpieces in the literature

of mysticism. *The Poems of Saint Paul*, they may well be called, for example, the Song of the Spirit-Filled Life (Rom. 8), the Parable of Christian Union (1 Cor. 12), the Hymn of Love (1 Cor. 13), the Pæan of Exalted Humility (Phil. 2), and The Unfolding of the Great Mystery (Col. 1. 9–29).

Peerless and incomparable among the texts of Christian mysticism is the *Fourth Gospel*. Here is mysticism at its noblest—emotion as rich as it is restrained, thought that moves in the cadence and measure of eternity, symbolism to which nature yields as if she had no other end, faith that has passed within the portals of reality and become knowledge, spiritual maturity that has found moral obligation identical with the will of God, love as boundless as the sky. Like the experience out of which it grew, this Gospel is a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

II

Passing from the New Testament into the later Christian literature, we note at once the little volume which has touched the heart of Christendom as few have done, Augustine's *Confessions*, with its intimate self-disclosures, its insights into truth, its prayers in the language of an archangel and in the spirit of the chief of

sinners, its passionate penitences and exultations. Out of the night of the middle ages there blazes upon us that bright, consummate star of mystical poetry—the *Divine Comedy*, the self-revelation "of him who from the lowest depths of hell, through every paradise and through all glory, Love led serene." So true and vivid an interpretation of the life of the soul is Dante's great poem that its mediævalism is lost in its universality. Very inconspicuous and lowly as compared with the *Divine Comedy*, and yet not to be overlooked, is the tender song out of the heart of Saint Francis of Assisi, so full of joyous nature mysticism, *The Canticle of the Sun*. Wholesome and devout, with a piety that goes to the heart of things, is Brother Lawrence's *Practise of the Presence of God*.

In the fair and fruitful garden of German mysticism as it sprang up in the fourteenth century, there bloomed many fragrant flowers of faith, one of which has become widely known and loved—the *Theologia Germanica*, a fragrant lily of piety growing upon the strong stem of right reason. John Tauler's pithy and profound *Sermons* have won a lasting place in the literature of mysticism. From the Brethren of the Common Life came a little book of such exquisite purity and piety, such utter unselfishness and devotion, such penetrative spiritual insight

and freshness of feeling, that humanity has taken it very close to its heart, "a lasting record of human needs and human consolations," unfailing in its spiritual ministrations—the *Imitation of Christ* of Thomas à Kempis. Jacob Boehme's *Dialogues of the Supersensual Life* will come to be better known as one of the choice products of a marvelous mind.

III

Turning to the literature of English mysticism, one is struck by the mystical note in *Piers Plowman*, though it is somewhat faint and strained. Passing reluctantly by Spenser's *Faery Queen* and *Hymne to Heavenly Beauty*, and Shakespeare's *Tempest* and *Sonnets*—since, with all their idealism and mystical atmosphere, they are not avowedly religious—we mention first the quaintly devout poems of George Herbert, *The Temple*, with its "lays upon thine altar burnt," redolent with the incense of true piety. One is strongly tempted to add that devout and reposeful nature book of Herbert's biographer, Izaak Walton, *The Compleat Angler* or *Contemplative Man's Recreation*, with its benediction upon "all that are lovers of virtue and dare trust in Providence and be quiet and go a-angling," but for the sake of those to whom fishing is inconsistent with

the love of "all things, both great and small," we pass it, too, by.

John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* and *Pilgrim's Progress* assuredly belong among the great mystical texts, the one recounting the experience through which the author "changed his drossy dust for gold," the other the incomparable allegory, translated into more than seventy languages, wherein we "lose ourselves and catch no harm," and "read ourselves and read we know not what, and yet know whether we are blest or not."

George Fox's *Journal*, rising like a flame from the cold and dismal piety of a formal and faithless age, has enough of mystic warmth in it still to kindle the dullest heart. Beside it should be placed that other Quaker *Journal*, equally noble and serious, but gentler and more winsome, John Woolman's *Journal*, and, in company with both, William Penn's *Some Fruits of Solitude*. Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying* have so much of the flavor of mysticism as well as of sagacity in them, seasoned with the salt of humor—and upon what subject is godly humor more needed than upon that of holy dying?—as to assure them a permanent place in mystical literature.[1] Not so, it is to be feared, with *The*

[1] W. K. Fleming makes much of Sir Thomas Brown's *Religio Medici* as a mystical writing, and there are quaint and mystical touches in it; but it is also the quintessence and classic of a strong common-sense view of

Saint's Everlasting Rest, whose occasional declamatory piety and rigid Calvinism overshadow its really beautiful mystical portions. Doddridge's *Rise and Progress*, searching and earnest as is its piety, is foreign to the mystical mind. Nor can Law's *Serious Call* be included among mystical books, although his *Spirit of Love* and *Spirit of Prayer*, written after he had felt the touch of Jacob Boehme, rank among the choicest products of English mysticism.

It seems unfitting not to include Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* among the classics of mystical literature, but in spite of their noble reverence and lofty imagination they fail, largely because of the prevailing deism reflecting the period in which they were written, to take us within the inner temple of experiential religion. Not so, however, the *Sonnet on His Blindness*.

The virile apostles of idealism who roused Great Britain from her materialism and spiritual lethargy in the nineteenth century were filled with the mystical as well as with the ethical spirit. Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection*, though formal and intellectual, may nevertheless claim a place among the classics of mysticism, for its

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religion and belongs, it seems to me, rather in that category. There is as much, if not more, of mysticism in that equally cheerful little book, written in deep adversity, Sir Thomas More's *Dialogue of Comforte Agaynste Tribulacion*.

influence in molding spiritual thought and life. Wordsworth, greatest of all religious nature mystics, has done much to impregnate our age with true mysticism, and in his *Ode on Immortality*, *Lines Above Tintern Abbey*, and in many of the *Sonnets* and other poems has made priceless contributions to the undying literature of the spiritual life. Carlyle, too, in spite of his growling pessimism, is often found among the prophets, with messages not only of righteousness but of profound trust. That piece of stormy earnestness *Sartor Resartus* almost deserves a place in mystical literature. Far more certainly does Ruskin's sparkling gem, glowing with mystical feeling and beauty, *Sesame and Lilies*.

Here and there in Keble's *Christian Year*, especially in the *Morning Hymn* and *Evening Hymn*, one comes upon a fine strain of the mysticism that marked its gifted author, but much of this prized book of devotion is too conventional and churchly to be truly mystical. In the Victorian poets we reach a full current of mystic thought, flowing deep and strong between banks of richest verdure. In such poems of Tennyson as *The Higher Pantheism*, *In Memoriam*, and *The Ancient Seer*, and in such poems of Browning as *Paracelsus*, *Easter Eve*, and *Abt Vogler*, we have a mysticism whose

wealth of thought and of imagination attest the age in which they were written, as well as the spiritual culture of two poets of extraordinary religious insight. Mrs. Browning, too, deftly unclasps the book of life and lets us read therein such tender secrets as are found in *A Child's Thought of God*, and *The Rhyme of the Duchess May*. Nor can we say that the canon of mysticism is closed when out of the heart of the London waif, Francis Thompson, who has been called "the greatest mystical poet of our time,"[2] in our own prosaic day, come poems of such thrilling spiritual power as *The Hound of Heaven* and *The Kingdom of Heaven*.

IV

Turning again from England to the Continent, we should not fail to take account in French devotional literature of a volume that gleams with peculiar luster—Pascal's *Thoughts*. It is a book of star flashes rather than of sunbeams, scintillating with wisdom that has issued from a great mystical experience, though charged with a subtle skepticism that by no means belongs to mysticism as such. Less brilliant, but nearer to the heart of mysticism, are Fénelon's writings. His *Spiritual Letters* are like an autumn harvest field bathed in the light

[2] Evelyn Underhill: *Mysticism*, p. 161.

of Christian love. Madame Guyon's *Method of Prayer*, which she calls "the application of the heart to God and the internal exercise of love," is one of the few satisfying books upon prayer. Very different in its atmosphere, yet imbued with the same spirit, is the *Journal* of Frederic Amiel, an enkindling record of victory over modern skepticism, with its calm and heroic joyousness and its revelations of the strength of a suffering and loving soul that has found the secret of true peace. German literature is altogether too ample a field for me to invade. Its richly mystical character, from the *Nibelungen-Lied* onward, is manifest upon even the slightest acquaintance. The mysticism of Schiller and Goethe is pervasive. That of Goethe, though often pagan in character, is always illuminated by Christianity. German philosophy too has produced many a volume deeply mystical in spirit, notably Fichte's *Vocation of Man*.

Coming to "visions and revelations," the reader of mystical literature halts deeply impressed before the writings of Emmanuel Swedenborg, whose message, especially in *Heaven and Hell*, has found so many groping hearts in their hour of darkness and brought a clearness of vision and a comfort which mere vagaries could not permanently produce.

Tolstoy's moving autobiography of a serious

soul, *My Confessions*, is a thoroughly mystical solution of the ancient quest after the living God. That acknowledged and grateful, though not always consistent, debtor to the mystics Maurice Maeterlinck has given us in some of his writings, especially *The Treasure of the Humble*, a beautiful expression of the mystical spirit, as also in that bit of Ariel literature which has captured so many hearts, *The Blue Bird*.

Not many American books have become world texts of mysticism. Not that there are not many volumes of spiritual insight and beauty in American literature; but few have been enshrined among the world's masterpieces. The conspicuous and ever-vital contribution of America to the literature of mysticism is, of course, the *Essays* of Emerson, lofty, serene, bathed in the light of the Over-Soul—reverent contemplations of the universe by a beholding soul. Whittier's poems rank next, quiet and sacred, like woodland paths in the "feverish ways" of modern life, full of the hush and serenity of the spirit world. Very different in tone and structure, yet stirring in their own impetuous mysticism, are some of the poems of the hobo mystic Walt Whitman, who well illustrates how even a soiled singer can be at times purified of dross. Cherished poems of

other American poets, such as Bryant's *To a Waterfowl*, Lowell's *Commemoration Ode*, Lanier's *Marshes of Glynn*, many of the poems of Henry W. Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes, William Vaughn Moody, E. R. Sill, Emily Dickinson, Henry van Dyke, and others, while they could not all be called classics, touch a chord that makes the spiritual world real and magnetic.

If we were to enter the field of fiction in this survey, we would find so much of the mystical element as to make many a work of fiction almost a book of devotion. Deeply hallowing and mystical are some of the stories of the writers who touch the heart most tenderly, like Scott, Dickens, Hawthorne, Victor Hugo, Charles Kingsley, and George Macdonald. Here, too, are such nature parables as Saintaine's *Picciola*, and such character portraits as *John Halifax*, the *Vicar of Wakefield*, *Colonel Newcomb*, *David Elginbrod*, *Doctor MacLure*, and hosts of others. In how many of us has some noble tale of fiction stirred the chords of sympathy and admiration, till the mystic music of idealism and aspiration has rapt us away into another world!

V

Of all the springs and streams from which

the heart of Christendom drinks, none is so perpetual a source of refreshment as the Christian hymn book. There are hymns and hymns —militant, doctrinal, patriotic, didactic, hortatory—but the hymns that upon the whole are the dearest to the heart of the Christian are the mystical ones. Such modern hymns—not to speak of the mediæval—as *Nearer, My God, to Thee; In the Cross of Christ I Glory; Jesus, Lover of My Soul; Abide With Me; O Love Divine That Stooped to Share; Dear Lord and Father of Mankind; O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go*—so simple, yet so profound and universal in their appeal—nourish the heart with an almost miraculous food.

The books of prayer too furnish mystical manna, to be gathered daily. *The Book of Common Prayer*, though marred by externalism, institutionalism, and occasional abjectness, is imbued with the spirit of mystical communion, and in this lies its real strength and grace. The prayers of the ages, as they have been gathered in various collections, retain their spiritual fragrance, like attar of roses. Nor have all the prayers been uttered that spring from the confidence in God that grows out of fresh-felt needs. Witness Stevenson's *Prayers* and that uplifting contribution to devotional literature by Dr. Rauschenbusch, *Prayers for*

the Social Awakening, with their revelation of what may still result when the spirit of man rises to meet with the Spirit of God.

VI

Deep and true, pure and exhilarating, is the literature of mysticism, "the sweet food of sweetly uttered knowledge," and far richer in extent than we have even indicated. The best outcome of our undertaking is, perhaps, to show its impossibility. Nor is there any reason why this literature may not be even richer in the future than in the past. As the spirit of mysticism embodied in Christianity comes into closer touch with the mystic mind of the race at large, with its varied and inexhaustible possibilities of worship and joy, there will be ever new impartations of truth, new outpourings of prayers, new libations of song. For nothing, save human refusal, can quench the flow of the Divine Spirit as it imparts itself to men. It was but yesterday that there came, from the heart of Bengal, *Song Offerings*, whose freshness and purity have made every reader newly aware of the power of the Eternal to awaken a response in the listening soul.

> When thou commandest me to sing it seems that my heart would break with pride, and I look to thy face, and tears come to my eyes.

All that is harsh and dissonant in my life melts into one sweet harmony—and my adoration spreads wings like a glad bird on its flight across the sea.

I know thou takest pleasure in my singing. I know that only as a singer I come before thy presence.

I touch by the edge of the far-spreading wing of my song thy feet which I could never aspire to reach.

Drunk with the joy of singing I forget myself, and call thee friend who art my Lord.

CHAPTER X

MYSTICISM AND THE MODERN CHURCH

If one takes the wings of the morning and makes his way back to the days of the early church, he finds that the secret of its life was primarily a mystical fellowship.[1] Not that it lacked organization and activities, offices and charities, but these were all actuated and infilled by one uniting and vitalizing Spirit. It is the presence of this Spirit, in fact, that made and still makes the church. Where two or three gather together constantly in Christ's name there is a church. *Ubi Spiritus; ibi Ecclesia.* And where this mystic Christ, this quickening Spirit, is not present, there is no church, in the true sense. Polities, creeds, clergy, sacraments, ministries—important as these are as instruments of the Spirit—do not constitute and cannot preserve a church.

The one supreme concern of the church

[1] "Whoever has any understanding at all for mystical religion will increasingly recognize how intensely it was at work in early Christianity." (Adolf Deissmann: "New Testament Research," The Constructive Quarterly, vol. ii, 4, p. 798).

should be to seek and to respond to the Spirit, both in its worship and in its work; in other words, to keep open the channels of the life that we have been calling mystical. It will be the purpose of this chapter to consider how this may be done more fully than at present and what the results would be, if the church were but more responsive to the Spirit. We will think first of the place of mysticism in the worship of the church, then of its place in the work of the church, and lastly of its relation to the furtherance of church unity.

Something is wanting in our worship to-day. Something always has been wanting,—yet not wholly. Else (as Emerson would say) how could we know that it is wanting? What is it? The celestial fire, the divine breath, the invisible presence, the Holy Spirit. Call it what you will, it is the one reality, without which worship is a desert waste and with which it is a fountain of life. Whatever the secret of worship is, it is an indefinable spiritual experience. It has a psychology, a methodology, but it wholly transcends these. It will not yield to analysis or formula. Rare as the spirit of true worship is—transient, elusive—it is as germane to the soul as fresh air to the lungs, as beauty to the eye, or harmony to the ear. Once experienced, worship will never be abandoned. We go

through the forms perseveringly, always hoping that through them, in some way, the Spirit will return, yet seldom asking what we have done to lose it and how it may again be won.

It is only as we approach public worship as a mystical reality that we can hope to realize it. Treated either externally or analytically, it escapes and leaves only ashes. If we ask what can be done to make worship effective in order to win men back to the church for the sake of the church, or for any other ulterior end, the spirit of worship will surely elude us. If we seek only how to worship God in spirit and in truth we shall find the Spirit Himself seeking us.

But if we would unlock the door of worship with the key of mysticism, we must first meet the objection: Is not mysticism, in its very spirit and nature, out of touch with common worship? Is not the mystic the man who can worship alone and anywhere, who needs neither place nor fellowship for his devotion? True; but the fact that he can worship alone is just the reason why he can best worship with others. Moreover, the mystic, though he does not always recognize it, needs common worship to sustain his individual worship. It is the fusion of individual religious aspirations and experiences that gives reality and power to common

worship. Each individual worshiper brings to the common worship much—and carries away more. The accumulated intensity of corporate mystical experience is a most striking fact. The psychology of the congregation is very different from that of the crowd. It is to the two or three *together* that the Christ presence becomes most real. It is when those who have been already touched by the Spirit are *with one accord in one place* that the Spirit comes upon them like a rushing, mighty wind.

To recover the heart of worship, clearly the first step is one of purification. We have too far lost the soul in the form; the outer has imprisoned the inner. We are fettered by our forms and stifled by our conventionalities. Cleansing must come before enrichment. We must find out what is defeating our worship and expel it. A candid scrutiny of public worship, as it is carried on to-day, cannot fail to disclose certain factors out of keeping with purity of worship.

I

First of all, of course, is that ancient and insidious foe of worship—impurity of heart and motive. Men cannot worship while they are cherishing wrong thoughts and motives. The Old Testament might have taught us this.

Much more, Jesus. "Leave there thy gift before the altar." First reconciliation, human relationships righted, then worship. In Thomas More's Utopia all family differences and jars are set right before attending public worship. "Thus all little discontents in families are removed, that so they may offer up their devotions with a pure and serene mind; for they hold it a great impiety to enter upon them with disturbed thoughts; or when they are conscious to themselves that they bear hatred or anger in their hearts to any person."

It is of no use for us to try to evade this law. If our churches are selfishly upholding wrong economic conditions, or cherishing an unbrotherly spirit, we cannot expect them to be filled with the spirit of worship. Whether they are or not, whether any individual church is doing so or not, belongs to no outside critic to say. It does behoove the church as a whole, as well as each individual church, to ask itself the question in all honesty and searchingness of heart. And with it belongs the question whether we can hope to have the true spirit of worship while we cherish sectarian and denominational pride and indifference. Those who serve one God should draw together for worship, if they expect to have his Spirit with them.

In the conduct of worship itself there are

manifest abuses that directly antagonize its spirit. Chief are what may, perhaps, be termed *choirism, pulpitism and pewism*. *Choirism* is put first because it is most obnoxious to the mystical spirit. It is not the choir as such that is objectionable, for music has always been a foremost factor in ideal worship. It is only the contrast between the celestial choir and the ecclesiastical, and that, not so much in the quality of the music as in its motive and inspiration. Music as an exhibition is one thing; music as praise is another. An operatic choir, that has no sympathy with Christian worship, installed in the most conspicuous place in the church, dominating the entire service, its members blighting, by their conduct, all parts of the worship, comes very near fulfilling the prophecy of the *abomination of desolation set up in the holy place*. It is said that on the occasion of an exchange of pulpits of Horace Bushnell and Nathanael Burton one of them found in the desk of the other an order of service in which the principal items were: *Ballooning* by the choir; *more ballooning* by the choir, and closing: Benediction, hurry for the doors, silence and the restored presence of God. Worse than the Covenanters feared from the introduction of music into the church service has happened in a large number of the wealthier

Protestant churches. Must we have another Puritan uprisal to purify our worship?

Pulpitism is another serious obstacle to true worship. By pulpitism is meant the obtrusion of the minister's individuality—not his personality, for that is hidden in the process—his peculiarities and poverties of mind and spirit, his crotchets and conceits, his notions and nostrums, so that the better man within—the Christ man—is obscured and makes no contact with his congregation. The freedom of the Protestant pulpit is at once its blessing and its bane. It gives to a weak man the same opportunity to display his weaknesses as to the strong man to exercise his strength. As a consequence, there is sometimes a degradation of worship through a use of the pulpit which is neither reverent nor Christian.[2] In reporting a questionnaire on the subject of "Non-Religious Persons," Professor Edward S. Ames quotes one respondent as saying, "Apart from its dogmatism, the pragmatic attitude of all evangelical Protestant churches I have known arouses

[2] Dr. Charles Cuthbert Hall pointed out this temporary decadence of the Christian ideal in an interview in the Presbyterian Banner in 1907. The cardinal weakness of the ministry to-day, he said, "is putting the chief emphasis on the institutional side of Christianity rather than on its mystical side; by that I mean that the appeal of the ministry is too predominantly a call to social service. I appreciate the pressing call to social service, but would first lead ministry and people to the true source of power in mystical communion with God. There must be a perennial fountain before there can be a stream. The inner side of Christianity is being undervalued."

instinctive prejudices in me."[3] He who has not felt something of that repulsion must be either exceedingly charitable or exceedingly fortunate. The preacher who surrenders to self-assertion, to captiousness, to scolding, or to sensationalism must bear the heavy responsibility of perverting his pulpit and of aiding in driving the spirit of worship from the church.

As for *pewism* as a deadener of public worship, who does not know what that is? The chronic critic, or the man with proprietary rights and bearing at the end of the pew on the center aisle with his retinue beside him, facing the whole service in the attitude of: "I have paid for this affair and it must be carried out to my approval" —is he a worshiper? Heaven save the mark! If he does not succeed in reducing the spiritual atmosphere to the freezing point it is only because the mystic in the free pew counteracts him. It is because much of the salt of the earth is still in our churches and because the mystic chord in the heart of all of us is sometimes stirred, even by the most bungling efforts, that the spirit of worship still abides in our churches. To eradicate the impervious, incorrigible, unworshipful *pewism* from some churches is as difficult a task as the church confronts. And

[3] "Non-Religious Persons," The American Journal of Theology, iii, p. 553.

yet even the stoniest pew-holder has something of the mystic in him and will yield to the tide of spiritual worship if it only becomes strong enough to humble him.

How meagerly and incompetently the church is using the noble resources of common worship! What unrealized possibilities are here! If the church could but command the *heart* of music, instead of merely its services, if by some miracle of grace the organists and choristers of the churches could all be transformed into devout and dedicated worshipers, so that sacred music could be seen and felt to be "the love of God made manifest to the sense"; if the hymns could be sung again as they were in the days of Luther; if prayer could become what prayer might be as an expression of the deep, ineradicable longings of the human soul, met and fulfilled by the inflow of divine love; if the pulpit everywhere could but become the true organ and interpreter of the divine message, trained, responsive, enkindled; if the people would but commit themselves to the great act of worship in the mystic sense of its measureless power and joy, we should see worship assume its rightful, incomparable, uplifting place in human life.

II

As the worship of the church thrives upon

the mystical impulse, so also does its work. Much of the world's work goes on through the compulsion of necessity. Not so with that of the church. Its work should flow from a deeper and freer motive. If the church is to be in the world, like its Master, "as one that serves," it must have his motive, and his sustenance for service.

The present emphasis upon social service, practical Christianity, in the church is most hopeful and Christlike. The awakening of the church to social righteousness is a true religious awakening. To belittle it is to misjudge one of the chief spiritual revivals of our time. And yet there is a danger that this movement will either die of inanition or become a purely mechanical and heartless thing, unless it is fed with the spirit of faith and love which burns on the altar of Christianity, but which *will not take care of itself*.

Nothing can take the place of a deep and passionate sense of the worth of personality, or, in older parlance, "the value of an individual soul." This is essentially a mystical valuation. It finds its most intense expression in the New Testament, in such parables as the lost sheep and the prodigal son. Whatever society, aided by the church, may do to redeem the wilderness where the sheep get lost, or to reform the

far country where the prodigal goes astray, is most desirable; but if the sheep itself, or the son himself, is lost sight of in the process the *end* disappears in the *means*. As Dean Shailer Mathews, one of the foremost among the exponents of the social gospel, writes, "Religion, to be anything more than humanitarianism, must give us companionship with the God of our spirits."

Yet it is not mere contact with others that we need so much as *humanized, personalized contact*—such contact as is exemplified by the true social settlement worker who loves "folks" more than "better conditions," or, rather, who works for better conditions for the sake of folks. It is a significant fact that so many of the social workers in America are members of churches. It is clear where they have gotten much, at least, of their original impulse and inspiration. Here is a new form of mystical service, springing up in our day and sending men and women into slum and alley instead of into hermitage and monastery. Of these newest mystics, Vida Scudder writes:

> Who could to-day honor the mystic who, in a great modern city, should shut his ears to the cries of the distressed and dedicate himself to the pursuit of a metaphysical light, or the solitary practice of the presence of a heartless

> God? Saint Teresa is organizing settlements instead of convents. Saint Catherine of Genoa is head of a training school for nurses which leaves her scant leisure for ecstasies of "Pure Love." The social situation forces materialism on us all, if by materialism is meant a primary and troubled preoccupation with the bodily and social needs of the human race.[4]

The danger is that, as this splendid work for the betterment of social conditions continues, it may get farther and farther from its source and lose the original motives which prompted it, that it may become so immersed in the reform of outward *conditions* that it will overlook the *persons* who are, after all, the chief concern. Miss Scudder detects this danger and writes:

> No thinker was ever satisfied with the description of Saint James. To do justly and to love mercy is all very well, but how about walking humbly with one's God? Detachment, recollection, impassioned union with the Eternal are no mere delusions of the childhood of the race, fading with the advancing day; they are the deepest necessity of humanity's manhood. Already a reaction is in order; the quest after the ultimate meaning of this mysterious life of ours revives on every hand.

[4] "The Social Conscience of the Future," Hibbert Journal, vol. vii, 3, p. 593.

It should be a cause of serious concern that the present revival of mysticism is not so much in the church as outside. The church, which has always done so much to nourish the mystical life, has of late years too far forgotten the unfailing need and value of this quiet, inconspicuous ministry and has been somewhat feverishly throwing herself into social service, as if *this* were *her* chief mission.[5] It *is* her mission to undertake the task of social reform when no other agency will assume it, but her chief mission is after all to nourish motive, to enkindle the passion that sends men and women out into social service with a faith which removes tenement house mountains and transforms desert areas of cities into gardens. Whatever the church does, *as a church*, in social work, should be done more for the purpose of showing that she is in earnest in her spirit and message than because such service is properly hers. Hers is the higher mission of developing spiritual personality, of kindling and replenishing the fires of faith, of bringing men into touch with God, and thus sending them forth enheartened for individual service and for larger cooperation in social service than any single church can secure.

[5] The best discussion of the mutual relations of social service and mystical religious experience that I know of is that contained in the sixth chapter of Professor Rauschenbusch's Christianizing the Social Order.

III

In nothing is there greater need for the realization of the dependence of the church upon the Divine Spirit than in the movement toward Christian unity now in progress. A common experience alone can supply the basis and bond of unity. The essence of Christianity has been made too exclusively either a historical or a philosophical problem. Both of these it is, in fact. But the question, what constitutes the essence of Christianity, formally and doctrinally, is subordinate to its essence as *spiritual experience*. It is only as we grasp that which is common in Christian experience, in the first century and in our own, and in all that intervene, that we understand the essence of Christianity, which is a filial communion and cooperation with God, so deep and real as to transform life. This spirit came through Jesus. Not that it was absolutely new with him, but it was so intense and fructifying as to exercise an almost creative influence upon those who came to share it with and through him.

Through all the history of Christianity this inward Christian experience has survived, overlaid and even contradicted by ecclesiasticism, theologism, and sectarianism. Mystical literature, especially the Bible, has served as the

vial, the chalice, for the preservation of the vital and essential spirit of Christianity. Our hymns, too, are transmitters of this common experience.

We have reason to believe that the time has come when experiential Christianity is to be regnant, as it never has been before since the flower of early Christianity faded. The hour seems at hand when the outward and incidental and divisive will give place to the inner and essential and unitive. As Bishop Brent has said, "When the disturbed and broken Christian Church comes to rest in the large scheme of unity, planned by its Founder, then the mystical life of man will gain a power and a splendor which now is but a vision and a hope."[6]

Protestantism is undergoing a most hopeful transformation in the direction of experiential unity. It shows itself in the widespread revolt against the supremacy of doctrinal theology—a rebellion which has, however, too far taken the form of a senseless root-and-branch attack against theology itself, instead of against its dogmatic perversion—in a growing distrust of literalism and narrowness, and an increasing tendency on the part of denominations and individual churches to draw nearer together in

[6] The Sixth Sense, p. 104.

sympathy and cooperation. "The conscious presence of God," declares Dr. Peter Ainslee, "is the normal height of the soul's attainment, and Christian union is the pathway by which we will attain unto that abiding communion with the Unseen for which we long and without which we shall never be satisfied."[7] Nothing but inner experience, a common spiritual life which all Christians share—however varied in expression—will serve to account for this trend toward union or bring it to its fulfillment.

How far will this affect our relation to the Roman Catholics? The effort on the part of the Ritschlians to prove that mysticism is an essentially and solely Roman Catholic form of piety seems singularly arbitrary in view of its history. The attitude of the Roman Church toward mysticism has never been any too cordial. It has, in fact, been too often characterized either by an attitude of toleration toward a half-alien habit of mind or by favor shown to mystics, not so much on account of their piety as of their power.[8] At times, as in the cases of Molinos and Madame Guyon, it has resorted to open hostility and suppression. The mystics

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[7] The Message of the Disciples for the Union of the Church, p. 37.

[8] A great deal might be said, though I think, on the whole, unfairly, in support of the thesis that the most representative Roman Catholic Ecclesiastical mysticism is that which runs into theurgy and spectacularism, represented by such writers as Görres and Ribet. See Inge, p. 264.

on their part have either sought relief from the trammels and evils of the church by instituting or joining monastic orders, or have found themselves compelled to attack the reigning evils and dogmatisms of the church, as have Savonarola, Dante, Michael Angelo, Tyrrell, and so many others. The loyalty which, on the whole, the mystics have maintained toward the church has been a loyalty to the ideal rather than to the actual church.

The marked honor paid by Protestants to the great Catholic mystics and their writings is significant. Dante has probably had more—and more appreciative—readers among Protestants, in recent years at least, than among Romanists. Madame Guyon has had far greater favor and influence among Calvinists than among the members of her own household of faith. The Spiritual Guide of Molinos has been a formative influence in the Society of Friends. The most appreciative histories of mysticism have been written by Protestants.[9] Indeed, Protestantism has as close if not closer affiliations with mysticism than Roman Catholicism, provided mysticism is taken in a broad enough sense. One has but to glance backward to realize this.

[9] Miss Underhill's books, especially her "Mysticism," dedicated "*In Honorem Omnium Animarum Mysticarum*," offer an outstanding instance of Protestant appreciation of Roman Catholic mystics.

IV

The rise of the Reformation, for example, may be traced intellectually to the Renaissance, spiritually to mysticism. The revival of learning, through the influence of such scholars as Erasmus, Reuchlin, and Melanchthon, prepared the way for intellectual freedom. The renewal of piety, through men of such purity of vision and devotion as Peter Waldo, Wickliffe, and Luther, prepared the way for spiritual freedom. Not that the two impulses were separate or divorced. On the contrary, the striking fact is their remarkable harmony in the earlier period. There is much of the mystic, as well as much of the scholar, in most of the great reformers and their precursors. Wickliffe, for example, together with his love of learning and hatred of imposture, had in him a pure and joyous mystical vein. The secret of the serenity with which he faced church and state undaunted is disclosed in such words as these:

> Contemplative life hath two parts; the lower consists in meditation, or thinking of holy scripture, and in other sweet thoughts of Jesus, and in sweetness of prayers. The higher part is in beholding of heavenly things, having the eye of the heart among the heavenly citizens, thinking on God, the beauty of angels, and holy

> souls. Contemplation is a wonderful joy in God's love, which joy is a loving of God that cannot be told. And that wonderful love is in the soul and for abundance of joy and sweetness it ascends into the mouth; so that heart, tongue, body, and soul, joy together in God.[10]

How this harmony of the rational and the mystical, the intellectual and the spiritual, which characterized the beginnings of the Reformation, was displaced by schism, manifesting itself in the Anabaptist controversy and the rise of the sects, rending the inner life of Luther himself, and ending in the barren Scholasticism of Protestant theology, is a sorry and familiar story. Protestant fanaticism and Protestant Scholasticism were the bitter extremes reflecting the schism in religious life following the Reformation.

To restore the broken harmony between the rational and the spiritual, to make theology once more vital, and to furnish a rational basis for piety, was a task which Protestantism was slow in taking up and which it has not even yet fully accomplished. Melanchthon felt deeply the need of harmonizing doctrine and piety, and did much to keep the two from disruption; but he was too far under the

[10] Of Active Life and Contemplative Life.

domination of Scholasticism to create a spiritual theology. Calvin, with all his noble service to righteousness, was too much of a legalist, scripturalist, and dogmatist. Thus both Lutheran and Reformed theology proceeded in the direction of formalism and orthodoxism and became more and more estranged from the mind of the Spirit.

Yet the fire of mystical devotion was never expelled from Protestant thought, any more than from Protestant piety. It survived in such men as Caspar Schwenkfeld, Sebastian Frank, and Valentine Weigel, searched the deeps of thought and piety in Jacob Boehme and William Law, and at length burst forth in surprising wealth in the great Wesleyan movement. The truth has never yet been rightly sifted from the error in the doctrines of the persecuted Protestant mystics, nor in such ill-understood sects as the Mennonites, Schwenkfeldtians, and others in Europe and in Pennsylvania. There are not wanting indications that there is about to occur a revision and reestimate of the period following the Reformation. A more careful discrimination will undoubtedly disclose among those valiant heretics hitherto too carelessly lumped together as "Anabaptists"—men like Hans Denck, Felix Manz, and Simon Menno—many who are

deserving of greater honor as heralds and defenders of true faith and freedom than they have ever received.[11]

V

That which is common to both Catholics and Protestants is every day enlarging, as the study of mysticism progresses. Eckhart and Boehme had much in common; so had the Friends of God and the Pietists, the Waldenses and the Wesleyans, the Quietists and the Quakers. Catholicism and Protestantism may have little in common, but Catholics and Protestants have much. Professor Loofs has but lately pointed out the real kinship between the *sola fide* (salvation by faith alone) of Protestantism and the piety of such mystics as Saint Francis, and concludes:

> Not to the dogmatics but to the piety of both camps must we look if we would measure how far-reaching is the possibility of mutual understanding. And here there has long been evidence that true Protestant piety, resting upon *sola fide*, can feel at home in high-thinking Catholic piety. The converse has also happened.[12]

[11] See in this connection, Professor R. M. Jones, Spiritual Reformers of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries; also chapter ix in Kuhn's The Sense of the Infinite.

[12] The Constructive Quarterly, vol. I, 1, p. 47. It would be difficult to overestimate the value of this Quarterly in promoting mutual understanding among all sects and denominations.

If Saint Francis was almost as much of a Protestant as a Catholic, Tersteegen (to select one of many) was almost as much of a Catholic as a Protestant.

The great defect of Roman Catholicism from the standpoint of mysticism is that it fails to call out and cultivate individual religious experience. It does not foster the Christian freedom characteristic of the New Testament. On the other hand, it does cultivate that common religious instinct, that social type of mysticism, which is so germane to the mystical experience, although in doing so it has resorted to questionable and sometimes vitiating methods.

Protestants cannot possibly overlook the superstition of the mass, which even its mystic symbolism cannot offset, or the utter incongruity between the papacy and Christianity. But neither should we forget the common bond of origin and of devotion to one Lord, and the possession of great essential doctrines in common. Above all, we have a common Christian experience. Faith and truth and love are universal in nature and speak one language. That which Whittier said of Quakerism might well be said of mysticism: "It has no church of its own; it belongs to the church universal and invisible." Many a

reader of the Imitation does not know whether the author was Roman Catholic or Protestant. Indeed, in Christian mysticism, as such, there is neither Romanist nor Protestant, orthodox nor liberal, but Christ is all and in all.

CHAPTER XI

MYSTICISM AND MODERN SOCIETY

For mysticism to mold modern life it must itself be of a very generous mold. It should be able not only to domicile and function amid the ideas and activities of advancing civilization, but to transform and exalt them. While this requires variation in the form of mysticism, it does not necessarily involve change in its heart and spirit. It means new wine in new bottles, but wine still. The old order has passed, giving place to new. Through the spirit and application of science has come a larger understanding and use of life; and this enlargement will doubtless continue.

The mystics of the past were more or less apart from the "secular" life of their time, either scorning it, or rebuking it, or ignoring it. The modern mystic is in far closer touch with the life about him. He cannot renounce it without renouncing genuine spiritual values. The semi-Christian character of modern civilization constitutes at once his opportunity and his danger, his advantage and his problem. He

is called upon to exercise careful and constant discrimination. A time like our own, which is characterized at once by philosophical idealism and practical materialism, a great altruistic social awakening and a strong tide of Anarchistic syndicalism, an unprecedented advance toward world peace followed by a fearful outbreak of war, a deep demand for social purity and a widespread mania of sexualism, a universal deepening of the Christ spirit and a universal turning away from the church—such an age calls neither for wholesale condemnation nor for uncritical confidence, but for the spiritual man "who judgeth all things."

I

One thing seems certain with reference to the mysticism of the past. It is that, while we must recognize, on the one hand, its distance and disparity from our civilization, on the other hand we cannot afford to ignore our spiritual heritage in it. Unless we turn back often, with reverence and teachableness, to the saints of the ages, we shall detach ourselves from our spiritual kin and leave unused a great fund of inspiration and refreshment.

One comes from fellowship with the great mystics in somewhat of the frame of mind in which he returns from a mountain climb. He

has breathed a purer air and caught a wider vision. It may be that he has no desire to live upon these heights; the air is almost too rare, the sublimity too great, the majesty too overwhelming. Yet he brings something of their loftiness of spirit away with him and is as one who has been a guest of the immortals.

We are too unaspiring, the mystics teach us, too easily satisfied. There are splendors awaiting and heights unreached and we stay in the taverns and lounging places of life and are content. These "Pilgrims of the Lonely Road"[1] have heard the call of the heights and obeyed. They have not been disobedient to the heavenly vision.

Companionship with these saints of the ages is sacramental. One can hardly acquaint himself with their lives without being ready to exclaim, with Thomas à Kempis:

> What pure and upright intentions kept they toward God! They spent all their time with profit, every hour seemed but short for the service of God. And by reason of the great sweetness they felt in contemplation, they forgot the necessity of refreshment for the body. . . . Outwardly they were destitute, but inwardly they were refreshed with grace

[1] The title of a fascinating volume of studies of mystics by Rev. G. Glenn Atkins, D.D.

> and divine consolation. They were strangers to the world but near and familiar friends to God. . . . They were grounded in true humility, they lived in simple obedience, they walked in love and patience; and therefore they grew daily in the Spirit, and obtained great grace in God's sight. They were given for an example to all religious persons. Their footsteps yet remaining testify they were indeed holy and perfect men; who fighting so valiantly trod the world under their feet.[2]

The author of the Imitation writes as if the mystics (or, as he calls them, the saints) were all behind him; and yet, from our point of view, he himself was one of the inner circle; and the succession has gone on unfailingly to the present day. It is impossible, that is, to write a history of mysticism as of a movement that has closed, because the mystics are a priesthood after the order of Melchisedec, having neither beginning of days nor end of life. One may write of groups or types of mystics in the past tense, but not thus of mysticism itself; for it lives to-day and will, as long as religion lives.

Mysticism has in it a certain *timelessness*, a habit and disposition of mind which belongs to man as man when he has reached a certain

[2] Imitation, xviii.

stage of spiritual progress, a spirit which links the nations and generations in a single brotherhood, which makes Plato and Moses, Jesus and Saint Francis, Dante and Francis Thompson, Bernard of Clairvaux and Phillips Brooks, the author of the Bhagavadgita and Emerson, Joan of Arc and Frances Willard, akin. The mystical mind in every age, in spite of temperamental, individual and environmental differences, is essentially one. And yet each age and each individual must work out its own salvation, and our age is in need of a mysticism consonant with its own peculiar aspirations and visions. It must be no longer remote and world-renouncing.

II

It would contradict much of what has gone before to say that in his world-scorning, self-repressive, self-denying devotion the mystic of the past failed entirely of realizing and enjoying the best things of life. On the contrary, he entered into many of its largest and deepest satisfactions. His eyes were unsealed to nature, and he often became, half unconsciously, a nature lover and a poet. Love and compassion toward his fellow man grew up in his heart, and he entered into the joy of service as well as of comradeship. The common tasks of life

were lightened for him by the spirit of love and self-abnegation which filled his soul. He knew the secret of banishing meanness and drudgery from life. And along with these, the mystic banished a still greater human enemy, fear. The mystic is the Siegfried who has slain the dragon Fear. He is released from this ancient enemy. Abiding under the shadow of the Almighty, he fears no evil. In the quaint verse of Crashaw, he may address the earthbound and fearful:

> There is no storme but this
> Of your owne Cowardise
> That braves you out;
> You are the storme that mocks
> Yourselves, you are the rocks
> Of your owne doubt;
> Besides this feare of danger, ther's no
> danger here;
> And he that here fears danger, does
> deserve his fears.[3]

And not only has mysticism done much to save life from fear and sordidness, it has brought out and fostered many of Time's sweetest and choicest flavors.

III

It would be interesting and revealing if some

[3] Quoted by Bishop Brent: The Sixth Sense, p. 82.

one would make a study of the place of *humor* in mysticism. If the facts were only available, it would not be surprising to find that much of the most delicate, playful and high-hearted humor that has issued from the heart of humanity has come from the mystical mind in its gayer moods. For the mystics could be gay. Did not Saint Francis and his companions call themselves God's *jongleurs?* Only the mind that is secure and far from fear can give itself over to unreserved playfulness. The child may romp and riot most when out of the mother's sight, but it is in the play that he has at her side and under her smile that he is freest and sunniest. The fevered chaotic mirth of hedonism,—let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die—the self-abandonment of unfaith, the mystic dreads and shuns; but of the humor that takes every misfortune lightly and finds food for jest where the stolid practicalist sees only solemn hopelessness and an end of all his schemes, of *that* there is much in mysticism—another evidence of its normality.

It is true that there is very little in mystical literature that reminds one of Punch, or Fliegende-Blätter, or Life; but one has the feeling that if more than one mystic, who might be named, had chosen to turn his hand to that sort of thing, he could have done at least

as well. As it was, he felt that he had something more essential on hand. Yet if a flash of righteous irony breaks into a high message here and there, as in Isaiah, Plato, or Dante; or a quaint phrase adds piquancy to the meaning of a line of Donne or Herbert or a sentence of Jeremy Taylor; or a love-winged arrow of sarcasm speeds to its mark in an allegory of Bunyan; or a lambent flame of kindly humor plays about a sermon of Eckhart, or a comment of Juliana of Norwich, or a poem of Browning, it is all in the day's work—the natural outcroppings of souls in love with God and man. Such mystic humor often lies very close to the most serious and high-hearted devotion to a great cause. One might not go far astray in listing Lincoln among the mystics—humor included. Life is never cheap to the mystic, except in comparison with eternal life. No one but a mystic or a hardened criminal could have hailed his headsman as lightly as did Sir Thomas More on the day of his execution. If any man of his time knew how to make the most of life it was the author of Utopia; yet he could lay it down with an easy pleasantry, for "he knew Whom he had believed."

On the whole, with all their renunciations and austerities, one will look long before he finds a company of men and women who have

gotten so near to the *heart of life* as the mystics. If they have brushed aside its outer petals somewhat roughly, it is only that they might get straight to its heart where is the hidden honey. Losing life for His sake, they have found it again. Through self-denial they have became masters of the art of true living. Such mastery of life and all its conditions is the only thing that will permanently satisfy the human soul, with its insatiable urge toward perfection. And yet theirs was too much a mastery by renunciation, not by appropriation. Their enjoyments came to them almost in spite of themselves, for they did not fully perceive that "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."

It is this limitation which, as I have tried to show, should be left behind in the cultivation of a mysticism neither excessive nor repressive. It were well for us to be altogether such as they, yet "without these bonds."

IV

It is a very general assumption that mysticism is inherently and exclusively individualistic, and therefore ill-adapted to social welfare. It is here, probably, that the largest question mark confronts mysticism. To this question let us again address ourselves briefly in closing.

Two apparently alien volumes have by chance been standing amicably side by side upon one of my book shelves during this study—Eckhart's Mystiche Schriften, and Rauschenbusch's Christianizing the Social Order. Can the objects and aims represented by these two volumes really go together, not only in books but in life? Many would answer "No." But would it be the right answer, the well-considered and final answer?

It is true enough that the forces and motives that make for social progress are some of them very unmystical and matter-of-fact. One of the two leading motives that have furthered democracy is, as we have seen, quite non-mystical—the assertion of individual rights, the struggle for material betterment.[4] Scientific investigation of the conditions under which men and women live and scientific knowledge of the means by which those conditions can be remedied have also played a large part. Still more potent have been the "rise of the masses" and the organization of labor. This movement has flourished largely upon material and self-regarding aims. Socialism, notwithstanding that it has so much not only of justice but of class altruism and even of idealism in it, is steeped in economic materialism. As such

[4] See Part ii, Chapter i.

it is abnormal, for it puts that first which should be second. The socialist state, if it should ever be realized as at present preached by the main body of Socialists, would be non-spiritual, nonreligious, and so far nonhuman. It would be that "ghastly, smooth life, dead at heart," which is the bane of so many victims of prosperity. For the Socialist as well as the capitalist, for all of us in fact, Tolstoy's Message to Mankind is a word to be received with deep respect.

Nevertheless, when all the purely economic factors in social progress, and those of self-interest as well, have been given full recognition, it is still true that in its main impulse and ideal the social and industrial awakening of our time is religious, mystical, Christian.[5] It springs from that other and greater force in bringing in the new Social Order, *altruism;* and altruism is rooted in mysticism. It is true that mysticism cares less for material good than for spiritual, less for institutions than for individuals, less for reformations than for con-

[5] "Mysticism may be said to express the inmost core of religion, because, in its insistence upon the 'nearness' of God and the fatherhood of God, it, *ipso facto*, conveys the sterling truth of the 'nearness' of man to man; in other words, the brotherhood of all men. It is thus the greatest incentive to works of altruism, to self-sacrifice on the noblest scale. The true mystic can never be a self-centered individual. He must recognize the image of God in every fallen brother" (J. Abelson, "Mysticism and Rabbinical Literature," Hibbert Journal, vol. x, 2, p. 429).

versions. But it does not follow that it is necessarily indifferent to social and institutional agencies. The very fact that the mystic seeks spiritual values may well make him eager to remedy all material conditions that stand in the way of the soul. His desire for the highest good of others leads him to befriend any means that will promote it. He is enlisted in behalf of civilization, though not as an end but as a means. If the storming of the Bastile was a landmark in the coming of the new social order, so also was the Proclamation of Emancipation.

If democracy has come in by the assertion of rights, it has come in also, as Benjamin Kidd has shown, by the conferring of rights. If it has come in by battle, it has come in also by prayer. If industrial liberty has been won chiefly by the strike, it has been won also by public sympathy for the striker.

As the altruistic motive and ideal have played so large a part in bringing the new social order thus far on its way they will surely play a still larger part in the future. In a striking paper, "Democracy a New Unfolding of Human Power," Robert A. Woods, of the South End House, Boston, one of the pioneers in this country in social settlement work, has written:

> Perhaps the surest ground of confidence that humanity is actually passing into this further stage of progress is found in the presence of a growing and spreading moral dynamic which is essentially new as a social phenomenon. There is, in fact, in the movement toward social democracy a peculiar sense of mystic power. It brings to the ordinary man that strange reassurance of the larger life which comes of itself through channels of loyalty. There is that scattereth and yet increaseth. A large intensity of service and cooperation goes into every one of the bewildering maze of human groupings, and is followed by a great recompense.[6]

There is a social mysticism, as well as an individual mysticism, which is carrying us on, with nameless might, into the larger human life. It is grounded in that which is the heart and soul of mysticism,—love. Do despite to love as we may, it will gradually mold humanity into its own image. As that valiant mystic, William Penn, wrote, in Some Fruits of Solitude: "Love is above all, and when it prevails in us all we shall all be lovely and in love with God and one another." This social mysticism is also personal. The social consciousness is not something impersonal, *sui generis*—mass-generated—but is made up of individual con-

[6] Page 97.

sciousnesses, however different the composite consciousness may seem to be from the aggregate of the individuals composing it. There is mysticism in aggregates of men as well as in individuals. The power of the Spirit is silently at work in concerted, as well as individual, convictions and advancements. The peace movement, for example, while it has its economic and social, as well as humanitarian motives, is at bottom spiritual as well as ethical, and roots in that love of man which is the obverse of the love of God.

V

Let us cease to look upon mysticism as essentially abnormal in nature or as *past*. It has had a noble history. Yet it belongs to the present and the future also. The potencies of mystical religion as it deepens and broadens, both for the individual and the race, are boundless. The "traffic of Jacob's ladder" rises "between Heaven and Charing Cross." All the relations of life are capable of spiritual values.

A deeper sense of the reality and scope of spiritual verities is surging in upon us, as the limitations of science are more clearly recognized. Scientific finalities are following theological dogmatisms and smug conventionalities

into limbo. We are climbing out of the valley, and the horizon broadens. So far from leading back to ancient mists and shades, the mystical pathway is the line of advance into a larger fulfillment of the possibilities of the world within through which the world without gets its meaning.

"The quest after the ultimate meaning of this mysterious life of ours revives on every hand." It may seem for the present as if this quest were a forlorn hope amid the brutality of an apparently wholly materialistic age. But in quietness and confidence is strength. The powers of an Invincible Order are with love and over it. The future is theirs who follow the Gleam. For that mystic Gleam, like the mystic Rock, is Christ.

In the quenchless light of the mystic vision, by the power of that Spirit which was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be—incarnated in the Redemptive Christ—humanity will not fail of its Divine Goal, a conviction nobly voiced in words put into the mouth of a shadowy mediæval mystic by one of the sunniest and sanest of modern mystics:

> For these things tend still upward, progress is
> The law of life, man is not Man as yet.
> Nor shall I deem his object served, his end

Attained, his genuine strength put fairly forth,
While only here and there a star dispels
The darkness, here and there a towering mind
O'erlooks its prostrate fellows; when the host
Is out at once to the despair of night,
When all mankind alike is perfected,
Equal in full-blown powers—then, not till then,
I say, begins man's general infancy.
. . . So in man's self arise
August anticipations, symbols, types
Of a dim splendor ever on before
In that eternal circle life pursues.
For men begin to pass their nature's bound,
And find new hopes and cares which fast supplant
Their proper joys and griefs; they grow too great
For narrow creeds of right and wrong, which fade
Before the unmeasured thirst for good; while peace
Rises within them ever more and more.
Such men are even now upon the earth,
Serene amid the half-formed creatures round
Who should be saved by them and joined with them.[7]

In conclusion, let me add a word as to the relation of mysticism to Christianity. Normal mysticism merges into Christianity, as a river into the sea, and both loses and finds itself in the larger truth. As R. C. Moberly has finely said: "All Christians profess belief in the Holy Ghost. Had only all Christians under-

[7] Browning: Paracelsus.

stood and lived up to their belief, they would all have been mystics; or, in other words, there would have been no 'mysticism.' "[8]

All studies of religion, including that of mysticism, lead to a fresh realization of the depth, the comprehensiveness, and the finality of Christianity, as it opens ever greater reaches and depths of human experience and reveals its exhaustless capacity for human needs and human progress. Instead of Christianity being a form of mysticism, normal mysticism is an element of Christianity.

What we need, then, is not so much a new mysticism, as a larger realization of the mystical element in religion as it culminates in Christianity.

[8] Atonement and Personality, p. 316.

Grant us grace to rest from all sinful deeds and thoughts, to surrender ourselves wholly unto Thee, and to keep our souls still before Thee like a still lake; that so the beams of Thy grace may be mirrored therein, and may kindle in our hearts the glow of faith and love and prayer. May we, through such stillness and hope, find strength and gladness in Thee, O GOD, now and forever more. AMEN.

—*Joachim Embden.*

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